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UP FRONT

Hi,

You're probably wondering what happened to us. Well, we've got a great excuse. It's called Christmas. You know, the time when people walk around with those boxes marked 'How To Be Taken For A Complete Sucker', and of which we are reliably informed 50% are never opened, let alone played.

But I digress. The problem we faced was coming out in the middle of November, and then being forced to come out in mid-December with our Christmas issue: a situation which would have been of no use either to readers or advertisers. The plan now is to appear in the first week of every month.

The more observant among you will have noticed we have eliminated the date from the cover. The reason for this is for the benefit of our foreign distributors who, when they receive the mag two years later, won't be faced with the problem of selling a magazine, that on the face of it looks obsolete. This also means that our overseas readers can

enjoy their read all the more, convinced they are reading all the up-to-the-minute-news in the wacky world of games. Never say GI doesn't have your interests at heart.

Which reminds me: many thanks to those of you who have written or phoned in wishing us well. The response has been great, both from the industry and the readership at large. Keep those letters (and subs) coming.

To all our readers, we wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year (no matter when you are reading this).

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

After visiting the Essen Games Fair one is forced to speculate on why the organisation of such an event is seemingly beyond what might loosely be termed the British Games Industry. One would think the possibility of emulating an event where 65,000 potential customers show up would inspire even the most jaded company into some form of action. No such luck.

Of course there was the London Games Fair (R.I.P.), but an inadequate venue, arguments over the ownership, and sheer incompetence, suggested the venture was doomed from the start.

But it's no good simply wringing our hands and moaning. What is needed is positive action, so here are some ideas:

- 1) Representatives from the games industry form a consortium with the sole objective of organising a games fair along the lines of Essen.
- 2) Once this has been achieved they approach an exhibition construction company with a proven track record with a view to staging the fair.
- 3) The consortium agrees to place the services of their respective PR companies at the organisers' disposal, and place flyers in their games' boxes announcing the event (this task can also be undertaken by anybody manufacturing a game).
- 4) For our part, we at GI will undertake to provide maximum editorial support for such a fair. In addition we will agree to work in a consultancy capacity entirely free of charge in an effort to get this off the ground.

That's the deal, and no, we're not holding our breath.

REVIEW SECTION

Star Ratings

Top class game. Highly recommended

Very good game. Worth buying.

Worth a look

**

Only if the subject interests you

*

A true turkey

Several new recruits have been press ganged into action this month to cope with the flood of boxes that have inundated our offices. Welcome aboard David Pritchard, former editor of *Games & Puzzles*; *Warrior Knights* and *Showbiz* designer Derek Carver; *Sound and Fury* editor James Wallis; and from Liverpool we present the biggest thing since the Beatles in the form of Norman Smith, while providing us with divine guidance from Northern Ireland we welcome John Scott.

Joining us on a permanent basis is former Games Workshop deadbeat Paul Mason, whose own publication once had the distinction of being described by Bryan Ansell as the 'hard left of the fanzine market'.

The game of the month was a unanimous choice; *Buck Rogers* is a fine game, and it will be a shame if it suffers from a knee-jerk reaction to the title.

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GENERAL GAMES



OF THE MONTH

BUCK ROGERS

DESIGNED BY
JEFF GRUBB

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £19.95

This new game from TSR is based on the stories of Buck Rogers's superhuman deeds in space. All very fifties and Saturday Morning Pictures but good fun nevertheless. The players take the rôle of one of six leaders who are fighting, as ever, for control of space. These include both good and evil characters with Buck and Wilma Deering fighting for the goodies.

While the plot does sound a little young at heart, this is ultimately unimportant and to say TSR have a winner here would be an understatement. The game is very close to ideal and the following comments should show some of the reasons why.

WHAT YOU GET

Buck Rogers is superb value for money. The box is the same size as the MB games it competes with and is packed to the brim with high-quality components. The board is large, mounted on stiff cardstock and has excellent artwork. Also included are around three hundred plastic figures, spaceships, killer satellites, factories and counters that are well moulded and already separated from the sprues – normally a time consuming task. I think the colour choice could have been better, as the plastics are rather dull, but this is a minor quibble. There are also the usual rule books, both basic and advanced, charts, cards, 10-sided dice and storage bins.

The pieces are well designed and convey the fifties feel rather well. The spaceships are very Flash Gordon in style and come in three types: fighters, battlers and transports. The first two are fairly similar and are the workhorse units for space combat and for escorting the vulnerable transports which carry the infantry while in space. The infantry, or troopers, are the core of all the forces on the board and are essential to capture new territories or defend the ones already held. The latter role is better performed by 'gennies', genetically designed fighters who are tough cookies but have to be designed for a particular planetary environment and thus cannot move away once deployed.

As the game progresses, players can elect to build killer satellites which float in orbit and attack any invaders. These are incredibly useful once a player has conquered a complete planet and wants to hold off surprise attacks on his base.

WHAT YOU DO

Each player starts the game with an identical, balanced mix of forces from those listed above. In addition, each

player has two factories which can be used to build varying numbers of units each turn. Troopers and gennies are quick to produce, as are transports and fighters, but battlers, satellites and new factories take a little longer. Each player must choose how to structure his forces. The production decisions add an interesting slant to the game and are often strongly influenced by the leader you are playing. This is because each leader has its own special bonus which can benefit any troops accompanied by the leader figure.

HOW IT WORKS

Those of you who have played the MB games will not be surprised to learn that the system is based on area movement with units having different movement factors. The board is divided up into fifty-four territorial zones of which, in the four or more player version, you need to capture fifteen to win. This number is increased in the two and three player variants with no drawbacks. The territories are allocated in the normal way by dealing out cards but of course, as with most games of this sort, you can choose to place forces in turn if this is preferable. There are five main planetary territorial groups: Earth, Mars, Venus, Mercury and the asteroids. Each of these is split up into seven or eight regions and with the moons and special territories make up the fifty-four zones. These land zones are surrounded by 'near' and 'far' orbit areas of space which in turn are connected by one of the most important and clever concepts in the game, the Solar System Display.

The display is a circular diagram in the centre of the board showing the orbits of the four main planets and the asteroids around the central sun. There are five planet counters that move around the display as the game progresses. On each of the orbits a sequence of points is used to move the planets around the sun and these are

connected by movement lanes. The orbits vary in size so that Mercury completes an orbit once every other turn while the asteroids, at the extreme edge of the display, take thirty two turns to return to their start point. As the game length is usually determined by one complete Earth orbit, of eight turns, the asteroids tend to make their way round slowly which can make travelling between them quite a long trip.

The beauty of the system is that when attempting movement in space, the unit, say a transport bulging with invasion troops, leaves a planet or moon, moves into near orbit, then far orbit and then onto the central display. This represents deep space and ships may spend a move or two traversing it depending on their speed and their destination which, of course, is always moving round in its own orbit. The outcome of this clever device is that the ship will sometimes be on the display trying to reach a planet, only to have that planet move further away. Of course, where possible, the clever player will wait ahead of the planet and it will come to him as it revolves. The effects, especially near the centre on the smaller orbits, take some thinking about and careful planning is required to rendezvous with the target planet to enter its orbit zones. Once safely arrived, the ships are deemed to be orbiting the planet and can then move easily to the planet's land areas to attack or simply to land.

Interesting navigation is just one result of the game's mechanic. All in all it leads to a constantly changing game as planets come into close proximity with each other and then move away. This means

alliances can change quickly as all of a sudden your enemy is on the other side of the system and a former ally must be watched in case of a lightning raid on your home planet. There is none of the slow expansion or stodgy stalemate lines of **Shogun**. This is all dynamic, shifting tactics that need some forethought.

KILL THOSE ALIENS!

Combat is quite straightforward: a ten-sided die is rolled to exceed a kill number for each unit involved. There is a basic combat result table which shows the various unit types and the numbers required to destroy each opponent. Simple, but exciting and also effective with the number of units on the board.

The combat possibilities are entertaining enough with fighter escorted transports trying to reach their targets, massed fleets of fighters and battlers fighting each other in deep space, and gennies and troopers struggling for the land areas. The system is flexible enough for players to devise individual tactics and the scope for strategy is immense.

ALL IN ALL

I can't pinpoint only one reason why the game works so well: it is more a combination of factors. **Buck Rogers** is similar to **Shogun** or **Axis & Allies**; it has similar victory criteria mainly based on territorial gain, and the components are of a comparable standard, yet it plays better than either of those two fine games. It seems that the designers drew

VIRGIN GAMES CENTRE'S BEST-SELLERS FOR OCTOBER

- 1) **Rubik's Clock** (Matchbox)
- 2) **Pass Out** (Paul Lamond)
- 3) **Scruples** (Milton Bradley)
- 4) **Trivial Pursuit** (Kenner Parker)
- 5) **Monopoly** (Waddingtons)
- 6) **DungeonQuest** (Games Workshop)
- 7) **Pictionary** (Kenner Parker)
- 8) **Scrabble** (Spears)
- 9) **Wicked Willie** (Paul Lamond)
- 10) **Adult Trivia** (Paul Lamond)

on the lessons of the pioneering MB and on other good games, added a few clever ideas and came up with an improved model. The difference is probably that the game is open-ended and flexible. Thus the game 'feels' better, it plays acceptably with two or three players, the play balance is very good, tactical options are plentiful, the action is fast so the game is not overly long; but most of all it's eminently expandable.

It is easy to go overboard when reviewing a good game, but when one thinks of the rarity of new games of this quality, perhaps that is no bad thing. In fact, the arrival of just one excellent game like **Buck Rogers** somehow makes all the turkeys worthwhile. To add to the appeal, the game is priced very competitively and certainly offers far better value than boardgames of a similar price. I have enjoyed playing this game several times in recent weeks and find it grows on me each time. It is a while since that has happened and I recommend it unreservedly to clubs, families or individual gamers. **Buck Rogers** is very probably the best game TSR have ever produced, it is definitely an all round winner and is therefore an easy choice for Game of the Month this time. My only problem is where to put the box.

Mike Siggins



EMPIRE BUILDER (3rd edition)

DESIGNED BY
DARWIN BROMLEY

PUBLISHED BY
MAYFAIR GAMES

PRICE £18.95

*** 1/2

This was once described by a colleague of mine as a 'solitaire game for 6 players'. A little unfair perhaps, but not without an element of truth.

The description refers to the complete lack of interaction between players. The fact that **Empire Builder** manages to overcome such a handicap is a tribute to the game's strength.

Superficially the game has something in common with **Railway Rivals**, in that

players create their own railway network by drawing on the laminated board. The object in this case, though, is to deliver goods as stated on the delivery cards. The greater the distance from pick up point to destination, then the greater the payoff. So far, so easy. The tricky part comes in 'building' the track on which your train will run.

The board depicts the USA and Canada, consisting of dots which represent mileposts between which your network will be created. To build (i.e. draw a line) from one milepost to the next costs \$1m. To cross a river costs an extra \$2m, and to enter a city an extra \$3m. As you start with only \$40m great care must be taken to ensure that you have enough to reach your destination.

At the outset you get dealt three delivery cards – each with three destinations. You get to choose one destination from each, though your train cannot carry more than two deliveries at a time unless you upgrade your engine at a later stage.

The object then is to select the best combination of deliveries, and to build your track accordingly, a task which requires no little skill.

There are no dice in the game; all engines move 9 mileposts initially, so other than the draw of the cards there is very little luck. The winner is the first player to amass \$250 million. With four players this should take about 2 hours. Four is probably the optimum number for the game: any more and the game can become rather prolonged.

This is the 3rd edition of the game and a big improvement on its predecessors, both in packaging and component quality. There is now a load tray so counters can be stored easily and the cards are of a much better stock. A new type of train has been added which can carry three loads but which only moves the standard 9 mileposts.

If you like railway games and have a preference for the cerebral then this is definitely the game for you. Should your interest be stirred by this then you may like to know that Mayfair have brought out a companion game, **British Rails** featuring a British map, and at the time of writing are playtesting a new European map.

Brian Walker

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MERTWIG'S MAZE

DESIGNED BY
TOM WHAM

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £4.95

***** 1/2

Boardgames tend to have physical components; cards, counters, a board and so forth. **Mertwig's Maze** is no exception. Boardgames tend also to have something for storing the physical components; a box, a bag, or similar. **Mertwig's Maze** comes in a cardboard folder with one *small* zip-lock bag. For a game which contains 190 cards, over 100 counters, a main board and eight minor boards – in fact everything bar the one ten-sided die needed to play the game – this is a major slip-up. Subtract a star for lousy format. Add two stars for excessively good value for money.

The game is set in a fantasy world, and falls somewhere between **Talisman** (Games Workshop) and **Tales of the Arabian Nights** (West End Games) in terms of style and feel. The idea is to explore the map, gathering companions, weapons, magic and treasure, and Having Adventures as you do so, until you have managed to collect two of the items which will prove that your character is a rightful heir to the throne. At this point you and your band of followers hot-foot it back to the palace to test yourself against **Mertwig's Maze** itself, and its guardian, the Mystic Musk-Ox. You also have to avoid the other players, who will do their best to beat you up and steal your treasures before you can get to the palace. The whole package is laced with Tom Wham's characteristic sense of humour, which is to say that the characters have silly names.

I have never regarded Tom Wham as a great humorist, but he is certainly an excellent games designer. He is probably best-known in this country for **Kings and Things*** (Games Workshop), but that pales into insignificance beside this game, which he designed and illustrated himself.

The main 'board' (folded paper) is in full colour and well designed, with spaces for the various types of cards used. In one corner is the Town, in which all players start and where they can obtain companions, weapons

and magic. Once equipped they set out into the wilderness, either on a quest obtained from the Encounter deck, or towards one of the seven places depicted on separate, card boards, or just wandering aimlessly. The movement rules are straightforward, fast and easy to follow, as is most of the game. Even the combat system which takes up most of the game play (although not the instruction book) is fast, well-ordered and simple, even if the optional rules for missile combat, magic items and so forth are brought in. Pitched battles between players are not unusual, and become far more frequent towards the end as everyone rushes back towards the palace. Every player is kept involved until the very end: if their character is killed they restart immediately with a new one; and even if a character has entered the maze, they can easily be squashed by the rampaging Mystic Musk-Ox – the signal for everyone to dash back into the field to find



that elusive Royal Birthmark(!). The final stage can drag on a little too long, but that is my only criticism.

I have no idea why TSR have decreed that this game is for 10+ year olds, since it's really very simple and a great deal of fun. The packaging lets it down but it's extremely playable and can be enjoyed by up to nine people at a time. Highly recommended.

James Wallis

THE YEAR SO FAR

ENEMY IN SIGHT

(Avalon Hill)

Making waves Stateside is this excellent little card game loosely based on **Naval War**. £10.95

MAFIOSO

(Casper Games)

Good family game with a lot of bluffing and an exciting ending. Nice components too. £17.99

6-TAGE RENNEN

(Holtmann VIP)

One of the best new games of the year, ironically from a cycling company. Easy to learn, tough to master. £16 (Now in stock at *Just Games*)

McMULTI

(Hexagames)

Formerly **Crude**, this has now been republished in a completely English edition by this German company. Super production and an excellent game to boot. £24.95

TV WARS

(Avalon Hill)

Underrated little number based on the cut-throat ratings wars in the US, coming soon to a screen near you. £19.95

CIRCUS IMPERIUM

(FASA)

Lunch with the lions in this futuristic chariot racing game. £14.95

DRAGONLANCE

DESIGNED BY
MICHAEL S DOBSON

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £14.95



The first thing that struck me was that this game must be expensive. The huge box shows the game in play, with lots of coloured plastic dragons, cards, tokens and pieces. When I saw the price, I was pleasantly surprised and eager to get started. The box informed me that I could 'Take to the skies on a dragon's back, and duel your enemies in 3D aerial combat as you strive to enter the forbidden tower'. It sounded like the game couldn't miss – but it did!

The disappointments started right from the set-up. The central tower's pieces and its six gates didn't fit properly despite a lot of forcing. Two of the six dragon teams (bronze and gold) were virtually impossible to tell apart. I eventually marked one with a felt tip. Still undeterred I soldiered on, starting with the basic rules. These proved a waste of time as they boil down to highest die rolls win. A roll of a ten-sided die gives your movement points for that turn, which can be used to move one or more of your dragons along the hex grid and vertically up or down height levels. Levels are indicated by placing the dragons on the correct number of height discs. Simple, but a bit fiddly in practice. If you end your movement adjacent to an enemy dragon at the same height, you can attack it. The result depends on who throws the highest on a ten-sided die, with the attacker gaining a +1 to the roll for each movement point used. The losing dragon is lowered in height levels by the difference in score, and a dragon which reaches zero height is out of the game.

Magic cards are gained when movement die rolls of 1 or 2 are made. They allow things like combat bonuses of +3 to +10, double movement points, teleport to any space and height, pass through walls without having to fly through your own gate at height 4 or

less, plus dispel other magic cards. The vast differences in these cards make it all very chancy.

The idea of the game is to get through your gate, climb to the top of the tower in the centre (height 10), capture the DragonLance and return it to your start. In practice, the opening moves tend to be a bloodbath on the crowded board with those throwing high decimating those who throw low, giving little chance to catch up.

The advanced rules promise better, with the addition of characters as leaders, flying citadels to chase in the hope of gaining a powerful artefact, aerial stunts, plus optional rules for 'realistic' movement and combat. Once again the game doesn't live up to its promise, although there is some improvement. The individual character leaders at least give each team of dragons a unique power, but if the rule limiting power to one ridden dragon only is used, a way of identifying that dragon is needed: more felt tip or plasticene. The artefacts are quite useful, and are gained by flying to the six citadels which circle just outside the gates. Entering can only be done at height 3 or the dragon collides with it and loses height levels. Once inside, the citadel tile is inverted to see what artefact it contains, but three are Good and three Evil. Therefore, only half are any use depending on your starting alignment. Again, identification of carrying dragon is necessary.

The improved movement and combat are better, but still too dependent on

those ten-sided die rolls. Turns are limited to 60 degrees with a limit of 2 heights climbed and 4 dropped per forward hex moved. Combat bonuses are limited to +1 or +2 for actions like dropping from above or attacking from the rear or flank, instead of the number of movement points used. The aerial stunts are a feeble attempt to give the illusion of 'dog-fights' but are dependent on throwing in powerful magic cards. In practice, the magic cards are more useful than being able to 'loop', 'roll', 'wheel' etc. Things have improved a bit but those die-rolls are still overwhelming. Combat will always be risky and dependent on random factors, but why should movement vary from 1–10 when so much depends on it? I also found that the dragons easily got knocked and with facing being important, it became annoying.

All in all, the game didn't live up to its potential. I feel the makers lost their way a bit and haven't produced a good fantasy or aerial combat game. The components look impressive and are well made apart from the two quibbles mentioned. Only the relatively low price stopped me giving it one star. In my opinion, most people will be disappointed, but a few may use the contents and adapt the rules to make a better game – but then, why should they have to? Only for the younger gamer and even then I bet the dragons get more use in fantasy wargames or rolegames!

Richard Ashley



MASTERPIECE

DESIGNED BY
MARVIN GLASS

PUBLISHED BY
KENNER-PARKER-TONKA

PRICE £14.95



My wife and I started quarrelling about this game even before we'd removed the shrink-wrap. She insisted we'd either got the game or had played it before. I knew that we hadn't on both counts and as the family game-keeper facts prevailed. But she had a point. There is a distinct feeling of *déjà vu* about **Masterpiece**, which is not surprising because this is its second appearance. The only really surprising thing is to discover how long ago it appeared for the first time – 1970 to be precise.

It's an 'Art Auction Game of Bidding and Bluffing' – an exciting, suspenseful trip into the elite world of the international art dealer' and to this end the box contains postcard sized reproductions of 24 paintings by world famous artists. These come up for auction from time to time and as they do so are secretly coupled with one of the 24 'value' cards. These value cards range from zilch to \$20 million. Players bid blindly, only being able to look at the price tag once they have bought the picture, and only then finding out whether as a result of their bid for the famous Leonardo they are quids-in or quids-out. This is one area in which the game falls down somewhat because when one is dealing with pictures in this category it is the auction price that actually sets the value! Parker would have done better to have stuck to a collection of fairly unknown works where something of a risk is involved.

So – back to our game. At the end of the auction you are the proud (or not so proud) owner of a painting the value of which only you know. The picture and its attendant hidden valuation card are held together in a plastic stand – or, to be more precise, in a plastic fall-over-if-you're-not-careful, and are

stood up (or, more advisedly, laid down) in front of you.

During the course of the game players roll dice and move round the board. According to the spaces they land on one of the following happens:

- the bank auctions another picture.
- the player is forced to put up for auction one of his own pictures (chosen by an opponent).
- the player may buy a picture from the bank for a stated price (\$5-8m).
- the player may sell a picture to the bank for its full value as stated on the value card.
- the player may buy a picture from another player for \$8m.
- the player may sell a picture to the bank for \$7m.

In addition there are a number of spaces that simply state 'Collect \$2, £4, \$6, \$8 or \$10 million' or collect a free picture from the bank.

The game continues until the bank has sold all of the pictures and the winner is the player with the most cash plus the value of unsold pictures.

So, 'Where's the skill?' I hear you ask. A good question. Although the box refers to skill plus a little luck, the truth of the matter is there is an enormous amount of luck. As I see it there are two minor aspects of the game where skill can be brought into play. Firstly, when as a result of a forced sale you have had to part with a picture that is worth just \$1m, and the new owner is forced to put it up for auction yet again, you can vigorously enter the auction, giving the impression that you are keen to buy it back. Should players remember that you originally owned it they would assume it must be worth quite a bit and with any luck will try to outbid you.

The other opportunity for a bit of skilful play is if once again you have a low value picture and land on a space where the bank will buy any picture from you for £7m. You refuse to accept this amount, thereby implying seven million is not enough. This might persuade other players to bid high if you are forced to put it up for auction. My only feeling is, though, that if you really are into such devious play you would have done far better to have applied your talents to a better game to start off with!

But having said all that one has to accept that Parker have been down this road once before and clearly feel that the intervening 18 years have produced a new set of purchasers sufficient in number to justify a relaunch on a global scale. I can't immediately think who these might be.

Should you be tempted to buy the game, or are given it for nothing as I was, I will leave you with just a couple of observations. Firstly you should try to play the game with as many players as possible. Pictures can change hands at auction several times and it's not long before most of the players round the table know what the values of the things are anyway. Secondly, because most pictures go for their average price of around \$8m you stand a good chance of losing as much as you gain, so you could quite easily play the game without buying any pictures at all and just going around collecting your \$2 to \$10 million hand-outs plus the odd free picture. But you'd have to have a pretty high boredom threshold to go for this option I guess.

Frans Hals's 'Laughing Cavalier' in the middle of the board looks very nice – except that he isn't laughing, he's smirking!

Derek Carver

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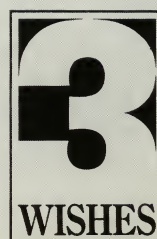
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MAN THE LIFEBOAT

DESIGNED BY
PETER SUMPTER

PUBLISHED BY
SAN SERIF

PRICE £14.95



This attractively presented family game will appeal to those who are Dame-Fortune-friendly: on your turn you roll not just one or two, but *eight* dice. In *Man the Lifeboat* each player controls two lifeboats, one for inshore and the other for offshore rescues. The praiseworthy aim is to rescue as many lives as possible from stricken craft. ('Responding to mayday signals' say the rules, but the vessels, which are depicted on jokey cards, do not on the whole look like the kind that carry R/T transmitters, but let that pass...)

The board covers an expanse of sea divided into four inshore areas and an offshore area. Each player has their own inshore area where their lifeboats are berthed and within which only they can operate. The offshore area, which covers the centre of the board, is open to the offshore lifeboats of all the players and it is in this area that wrecks

are first sighted (they can drift inshore if help doesn't arrive quickly). There are a few rocks about and if a boat in distress ends up on one of them it founders. Finally, a compass rose and a latitude/longitude grid are superimposed on the board to establish direction and position respectively.

The eight dice control the game. Two identify the position of a vessel in distress; two more the drift of any vessels previously reported; and the remaining four, which are in the same colours as the players' tokens, the number of squares each player's lifeboat can move. You effect a rescue by landing on a square adjacent to a stricken vessel. The vessel is taken out of play and you draw a card which says how many people you have saved (the number can vary between 1 and 6). This is inserted in your personal 'Services Rendered' holder. Another shipwreck is then introduced (a maximum of two are on the board at any one time). When a player's holder is full (six rescues) the game ends and the player who has saved the most lives is predictably the winner. The average game for four players lasts about 45 minutes.

The game is described as 'a tribute to the R.N.L.I.' while the box rather coyly proclaims that 'Buying "Man the Lifeboat" will ensure contribution (sic) to the R.N.L.I.'

The game hardly measures up to the cause; the only decision a player has to make is to decide in which direction he should sail his lifeboat. And usually that



is obvious: he heads for the nearest shipwreck. The optimum position to reach is a knight's move away from the prize, or possibly blocking the path of a rival (you don't imagine lifeboats cooperate in a rescue, now do you?). If it looks as though you are going to be last on the scene, however, it may pay you to head for the open sea so that when the next shipwreck is sighted you have a good chance of being somewhere in the vicinity.

The rules are of the standard one expects from a modern board game; namely sub-standard; and I am curious about the solitary sandbank (not identified) – presumably a rock that the printer overlooked.

Man the Lifeboat is fast-moving and undemanding, but one feels that it could have been developed into a better game.

David Pritchard

MERCHANT OF VENUS

PUBLISHER
AVALON HILL

DESIGNER
RICHARD HAMBLÉN

PRICE £21.95



On the whole, trading games seem to split people into those who like them

and those who couldn't give a damn. If I were asked to name my favourite sort of game, after sports games it would probably be this type: which makes the task of reviewing new releases quite appealing. Trading games also seem to be something of a perennial in games publishing but they must be hard to get right as I am still looking for the definitive design. As a result, for most of this year I have been awaiting with interest the new space trading game from Avalon Hill called *Merchant of Venus*. Pre-release comments seemed favourable and a clever and original solitaire system was promised. The only catch was that the designer is Richard Hamblen of *Magic Realm* fame. For those who don't know, *Magic Realm* was a fine game trying to escape from its rather opaque rule book.



SCIENCE FRICTION

Merchant of Venus's game scenario is pretty much standard in that each player has a starship and some money and has to zoom around the galaxy, buying and selling goods at a profit. The player who earns the required amount of money first, wins. All good, sound, capitalist stuff. What amazes me then is that when Avalon Hill finally find a trading game they consider worth publishing, they grace the box with the most hideous artwork I've seen on a game, bar none. It is all the more surprising because the box artist is George Parrish, whose work I normally admire. I think it is clearly a case of the artist perceiving what science fiction fans want and getting it totally wrong. That said, the ugly art is only skin deep. Inside the box is a large mounted map with serviceable artwork, lots of colourful counters and play aids, AH money and the usual charts and rule book. This is all well presented and up to the renowned Avalon Hill standards.

The board portrays a fictional area of space consisting of sixteen systems which are connected by space lanes, along which the players' ships move. Each system has a different layout of planets, star bases and an undiscovered alien race. They also contain relic chits which can be used or collected for later trading. To dissuade eager relic collectors, some of the relic chits carry bad news in the form of penalty markers. On finding on one of these, the player is forced to end his turn or pay the penalty in hard earned and scarce dollars. Other, more obvious, penalty zones are also present at various points on the game board and we viewed them as a sort of intergalactic toll gate or possibly a way of simulating tariffs on trading in a system, but the game describes them as 'radiation hazards that affect trespassers'. Mmmm. Either way, it is a clever way of restricting movement which would otherwise be verging on generous.

The rule book follows the recent Avalon Hill trend of having a 'quick start' rule sheet and the full rule book to settle any disputes, check interpretations and cover the background notes. I like this approach as it enables the experienced player to get going quickly and also saves some poor sap, usually me, having to sit down prior to the game and read thirty pages. So, how do they compare with **Magic Realm's** comedy of errors?

Very well indeed. Mr Hamblen has come good with a set of rules that, while not a masterpiece of clarity, outlines the set up and play very well. We got the whole thing going from opening the box to playing the first turn in about 20 minutes, which is a pleasant change. The best tip I can give you on set up is to become familiar with all the types of counters and follow the steps carefully as to where they should be placed.

SHIP 54 WHERE ARE YOU?

Up to six players start the game in Galactic Central in their little scout ships. Each ship can carry two items of cargo in the hold and has a movement factor of four. This enables the player to roll four dice and the total is the number of sections on the space lanes the ship can move. Movement is quite straightforward and is only complicated by the strange galactic one way roundabout systems. The early game is spent plodding round exploring new galaxies, landing on planets and discovering the aliens that inhabit the worlds. The discovery of aliens is rewarded by a bonus or 'IOU' which can be used later for buying goods. When the aliens become active their goods for sale become available to all players and assuming you have enough cash or tradeable items you can purchase them and store them on board ship for transport to buying markets.

Each alien race sells specific goods and these goods can in turn only be sold to races who have a demand for them – these races are indicated on the reverse of the goods chits. This is rather perverse logic as in the early stages only a few alien races are active and you may therefore only be able to buy goods that you can't sell, so you charge off round the planetary systems until you find one of the buyers. Presumably the designer intends that you don't buy the goods until buyers are discovered which is logical enough but why would they be producing them in the first place? Not only does this seem a trifle odd, but also each player represents one of the alien races which entitles him to discounts at his home planet, sort of 'six free tumblers with every warp drive purchased'. The trouble is that he may not know where that planet is. These points, taken with the rather tongue in cheek goods and alien descriptions, make the game a tad 'unrealistic' for my tastes.

The trading is certainly geared to high profit margins. The 'spread' between the buying and selling price is high and in the designer's notes it is said to emulate the 16th century spice trade. The game starts slowly with players making cash where they can and buying cheap goods or a few luxury items. The bonuses from relics and discovering races are vital at this stage. The pace builds interestingly as the more lucrative trade routes gradually become obvious and the galaxy is opened up. This is the real heart of the game and the rest of the rules simply add variety to the system.

COUNTDOWN

The length of the game really determines how many of the more strategic rules come into play. The standard game is won when a player reaches \$2,000. By increasing this figure the game is lengthened beyond the average of two hours or so by about one hour per \$1,000. The flexibility and accuracy of the game length enables play to fit into almost any free slot, which is always useful, and the longer the game goes on the more interesting the strategic options become. With few exceptions, it is only in the longer games that it makes sense to take advantage of the rules for building factories, forts and buying larger ships.

RASTUR MAN VIBRATIONS

Interaction between players is quite low in the two or three player games, but with four or more it really starts to get interesting thanks to the tightly packed routes and limited goods. For these reasons, I feel it is essential to use the optional combat rules which enable the players to put lasers, 'nova balls', shields and extra rockets on their ships and to adopt piracy tactics. This gets the peace conscious traders worried as their defenceless ships are no match for the aggressive players and cargo is lost easily. The next step is usually 'defensive' lasers and the arms race starts.

For those without opponents the game provides an excellent solitaire system which involves an aggressive alien race called Rasturs. Presumably these boys trade dreadlock wigs and Studio One bootlegs. The alien plays a difficult rather than good game and neatly gets

round the 'intelligent opponent' problem by steaming in wherever possible in large numbers. While no game has a perfect solitaire system, this is among the better ones.

There is a fair luck element involved which can sway the game but it is not too overpowering and sound strategies will normally win through. The chances of someone coming across some very valuable relics, finding a short trade route that is highly profitable and then screaming away to victory is rare but that is exactly what did happen in one of our games. The beauty of it is that the

game is then over quickly and you can start another. The main thing to do is to ensure during set up that the relic chips are spread randomly throughout the board.

IN SUMMARY

Merchant of Venus is a fine game but not quite a classic. The one small drawback, and it is a personal view, was the weak overall logic and the childish names. It is tough to get excited about trading Bionic Perfume to the Eepeeeps and as a result it didn't quite

work for me on this level. Nevertheless, this is a game to which much thought has been applied and it works well as it stands, though it also cries out for rule tweaks and expansion packs.

Richard Hamblen has devised a system that has some clever design tricks, works within a reasonable time, has plenty of options and offers high playability and balance. With the possible exception of SPI's out of print **Star Trader**, I would say it is the best trading game so far.

Mike Siggins

SEASIDE FROLICS

DESIGNED BY
PETER SUMPTER

PUBLISHED BY
SAN SERIF

PRICE £19.95

Come back with me to the Edwardian England of smog, gas-lamps and gin at two-bob-a-bottle. The good news is that we're just off on our annual holiday at the seaside (a week if you're lucky, or perhaps you can only get off work for a day or two?).

I've emptied the old teapot and it looks as though there's enough for a bob-a-day each spending money. So here's a couple of tanners – see they last 'til breakfast. Now it's into the booking hall and bang goes sixpence right away on the fare – the ticket's no cheaper whether you travel with the Chaffem or Slocum Railway Company. Collected your colour postcard? It doubles as a return ticket. Time to pop in the buffet or smoke room (cost a copper or two but you add to your card collection).

Smell the winkles? Yes, we've arrived – it's Shrimpton-on-Sea. We should have time to take in a bit of sightseeing before we turn up at our digs (Seaview Hotel – spring mattresses, no second helpings). If we're not in by midnight we're in trouble! (See the clock? It advances an

hour with every game turn. Each day starts at 8am and ends at midnight.)

Day Two. A bob all round from the kitty and we're off to enjoy ourselves and, naturally, collect as many jolly postcards as we can. First, check the admission times (they change every day here); no point getting to the zoo and finding it closed!

Keep an eye on the clock and off we go (roll the die). A sea trip (hang on to your boater), a donkey ride perhaps, or Punch and Judy? And splatter my spats if there isn't a band concert on the beach for only a penny! And when our money runs out there's always a sing-song or a spot of beachcombing or, if you can pull the girls like I can, a bit of spooning. (Snogging, I fancy, was unknown, at least by that name, in Edwardian days.) And if you get sore feet tramping from one hoot to another, you can jump a tram. Tram tickets are thruppence, but they last all day.

When you are shagged out or broke or both, and anyway before midnight, it's back to the old Seaview for a good night's kip.

And next day you're off again – to the rock pool, or for a bathe, or a trip to Puffin Island. If you're flush you can get the chap with the plate camera to take your likeness (don't move: it's a ten-second exposure); or there's riding or a bit of angling, and in the evening (check the closing time) there is always the peep shows on the pier. As I said, there's plenty to do...

Sometimes you get a surprise, which may be pleasant or otherwise. (Roll the die to find out. The bad news is that you can't keep the postcard.)

Time, alas, to return home. Got your return ticket? Then reluctantly it's off to the station, but if we're there in good time and have a few coppers left, the saloon bar beckons – and that means another postcard.

Home Sweet Home! Now's the time to sort through your postcards and count up the points. (They're colour coded in sets, the postcards I mean: every complete set earns you bonus points.) Looks as though you've won – but wait a sec, isn't that a tanner in your mitt? 30 points deducted – that was spending money, not for the piggy bank. Oh well, now it's just memories for another year...

As you gather, good family fun and in my view the best game in the San Serif range. Not exactly demanding on the intellect, but the graphics are super and the clock adds, as they say, another dimension. There are 35 different postcards – half-a-dozen of each – all by Tom Browne RBA, a leading Edwardian artist, mostly scoring between 5 and 100 points. There is a chance element, though: Home Sweet Home can notch you up anything between 50 and 100 while if you're just out for a stroll you'll have to be content with 5–10. The more you spend on an amusement, the higher the point value of the corresponding postcard.

Quibbles? Very few. The different direction arrows take a little getting used to and the board spaces are a trifle small for the tokens, but these discomforts vanish in the splendid nostalgia. Even those humble pennies depict either Edward or Victoria – how's that for realism?

David Pritchard

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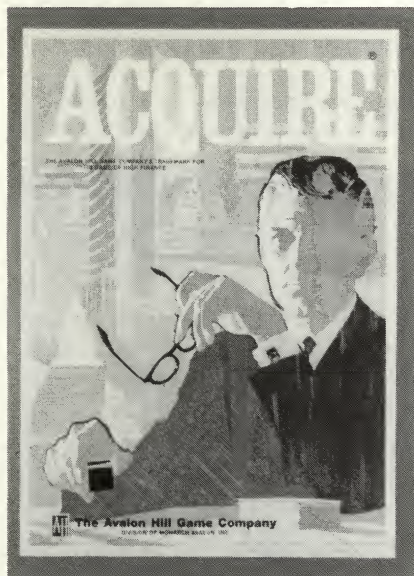
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Christmas Crackers

An A-to-Z listing of recommended games for thinkers and drinkers looking for suitable ways to avoid the telly terribles.

Acquire (Avalon Hill)

May be a little dry for the festive season but a classic game nevertheless. 2-6 players attempting to build hotel chains and takeover other chains for maximum profits. £17.95.



Armchair Cricket (Armchair Adventures)

Summer, winter, what's the difference? This superb little card game is excellent value all the year round. Includes advanced rules for old pros. 2-4 players. £7.95.

Broadway (TSR)

Good old-fashioned family game in which players invest in musicals then attempt to present them on the Great White Way. 4-6 players. £13.95.

Bottom Line (Silver Bear)

Easy to learn financial game for 3-6 players. A nice combination of strategy and chance. £19.95.

Buck Rogers (TSR)

Excellent value war-in-space theme featuring over 300 miniatures. Clearly

presented rule book with a host of optional rules. 2-6 players. £19.95.

Cluedo (Waddingtons)

Colonel Mustard's a bit old hat now but the new advanced version promises something more challenging. 2-4 players. £9.95.

Connoisseur - The Wine Game (Villa Games)

You don't have to be a wino to enjoy this beautifully produced game which arrives in a wine box. 2-6 players. £19.95.

Consulting Detective (Sleuth Publications)

Hard boiled and tough to crack. This is the game for brainy sleuths. Expansion kits available. Any number of players from one upwards. £19.95.

The Cooking Game (Pilgrim Games)

Chase around the kitchen picking up ingredients to make the mouthwatering recipes supplied by Jane Grigson. Lavishly produced, a joy to play, and a marvellous appetite builder! 3-6 players. £15.95.

DungeonQuest (Games Workshop)

Lots of nice bits in this fantasy game but heavily luck orientated. A good one for the kiddies. 2-6 players. £14.95.

Elixir (Three Wishes)

Good family game for wizard detectives seeking to discover the magic potion. Suitable for ages 8 and up. 2-4 players. £12.95.

Family Business (Spielfreaks)

Unavailable for many years this classic card game has just been republished in a splendid new edition. 2-6 players. £9.95.

Fury of Dracula (Games Workshop)

One of this company's best boardgames. Terrific artwork and quite a sophisticated game. For 2-4 players. £14.95.

Grass (Executive Games)

Excellent card game with dodgy theme of dope dealing. A minor classic. 2-6 players. £8.95.

Hare & Tortoise (Gibsons)

Classic race game from David Parlett based on Aesop's fable. Winner of several international awards. 2-6 players. £12.95.

Illuminati! (Steve Jackson Games)

Super card game from the guys and gals in Texas. Probably a bit too sophisticated for the average family, though. 2-6 players. £12.95.

Junta (West End Games)

Outstanding party game in which players attempt to become president of a fictional banana republic and make deposits in their Swiss bank account. Highly recommended but allow some time to study the rules. 3-7 players. £12.95.

Kremlin (Avalon Hill)

Satirical game of purging and denouncements in the Soviet politburo. Lots of room for strategy and player interaction. Highly recommended. 4-6 players. £17.95.

Labyrinth (Ravensburger)

Nicely put-together maze game. Primarily aimed at children, but challenging for adults too. 2-4 players. £9.95.

Megalomania (Henry Games)

Fun election game featuring blackmail and swingometers. For 2-6 players. £19.95.

Mafioso (Casper Games)

One of the best family boardgames this year. Lots of poker-style bluffing as players attempt to hit the hit men. 2-4 players. £17.95.

Nuclear War (Flying Buffalo)

Bad taste card game in which entire populations can be wiped out. There's

even an expansion kit. 2-8 players. £10.95.

Orgy (Commisatio)

Frankie Howerd's favourite game. Have plenty of food and cocktails at the ready and be careful who you are sitting next to. 2-6 players £19.95.



Orient Express (Robenau)

Pullman class deduction game. Winner of several awards on the continent. 2-6 players. £19.95.

Poleconomy (Spears)

Now repackaged and with a few rule changes which make for a better game. 2-6 players. £18.95.

Quest for the Dragon (Quest Games)

Tile-laying game similar in concept to **DungeonQuest**. Undemanding, but good fun for fantasy freaks. 2-6 players. £17.95

Rollout (Supremacy)

Heavyweight financial game which might be hard going after the Christmas pud, but well worth it. 2-6 players. £25.95.

Railway Rivals (Rostherne Games and Games Workshop)

Classic railway game for all the family. Available in either a tube, or boxed. Whichever you choose you can't lose. 2-6 players. £6.95 (tube) £12.95 (boxed).

Scotland Yard (Ravensburger)

One of the rare cases of cream rising to the top. Sales of this unique deduction game have now passed the million mark. Quite right too, for this is more than a fair cop. 2-6 players. £12.95.

Sagaland (Ravensburger)

Excellent memory game and beautifully produced, as one has come to expect from this German company. 2-6 players. £9.95.

Shark (Flying Turtle)

Semi-abstract stock market game from Belgium which provides a neat combination of luck and skill. 2-6 players. £15.95.

Top Secret (Robenau)

Clever combination of deduction

and memory from one of the world's top game designers, Alex Randolph. 2-4 players. £12.95.

Undercover (Ravensburger)

Another excellent German game known in its native land as Heimlich & Co. Although this is a completely English version it has never been released in this country though you may find it at a few specialist shops which import games. 3-8 players. £8.95.

Vultures (Henry Games)

Lightweight but fun game about these scavenging creatures. Nice graphics. 2-4 players. £18.95.

Wildlife Adventure (Ravensburger)

Outstanding game that really does appeal to all the family. Beautifully made with lots of strategy as players launch expeditions to locate exotic animals. Highly recommended. 2-6 players.

Win, Place and Show (Avalon Hill)

The best horse racing game ever and of



which you'll never tire. A genuine classic. 2-6 players. £14.95.

Xerxes (F X Schmidt)

Two-player abstract game, highly cerebral, not much fun, but we had to fill this space somehow! £12.95.

Yahtzee

Die-rolling game for those rather short of grey matter. 2-6 players. £5.95.

Zilch!



HOME RUNS

In the second of our series on sports game simulations, Mike Siggins gives you the pitch on baseball games.

In the last issue I covered the American Football games available on the market and indicated then that the interest in the sport was due to the television coverage on Channel 4. Baseball seems now to be in a potentially similar position, though coverage is not at the peak viewing times that football enjoys. Nevertheless, those of you who have religiously set the video all summer or have seen the playoffs and World Series coverage will know that baseball is an exciting, skilful and subtle game and it may be that the sport will take off in the same way. In this introductory article I hope to cover some of the baseball games and simulations currently on the market. Now that the World Series is over and the close season is upon us until next April, the time is ideal to play some of the games. I have been following baseball for nearly ten years

now (the Philadelphia Phillies for my pains) and have been involved on the gaming side since 1980, when I bought my first copy of Avalon Hill's **Statis Pro Baseball**. Since then I have acquired most of the baseball games available, played them extensively and have run some of them as postal and face-to-face leagues.

It all started with the traditional boardgame, whose formative years were in the 1940s and '50s and stemmed from baseball card mania. Most games allow you to take charge of your favourite players, to call the plays and see if you can out-manage Whitey Herzog. This 'role-playing' element is their true appeal. The games usually come in a box containing a playing board, rules, scorecards, counters or the like, player cards and either dice or 'fast action cards' – more on these later. Almost without exception the games are designed and printed in the States and imported into the country by UK agents or enterprising shops. Prices vary from around £10 to £30 depending on the size of the company and content.

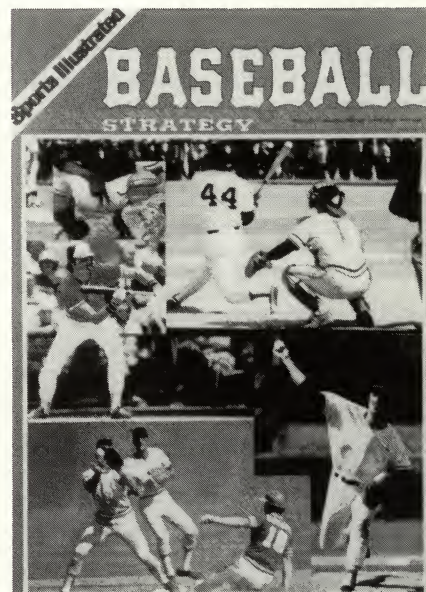
Boardgames fall into three main groups:

- Basic, tactical games which offer the flavour of playing a single baseball game. Players are often anonymous or historical All Stars.
- Statistic based replay games which seek to simulate a real game or season as closely as possible using real-life performances from a given season as a basis.
- Macro level league management games where the player runs a team through an entire season playing the full 162 games. Tactical detail gives way to more strategic possibilities.

In any discussion of baseball games the Avalon Hill Game

Co of Baltimore will always have centre stage. They produce the licensed range of Sports Illustrated games and are the most readily available baseball games in the UK, through TM Games. Their titles cover the whole range of types mentioned above.

A good starting point is **Baseball Strategy**. This has 'generic' player cards with differing abilities, and allows all the tactical decisions of a baseball game such as steals, bunts and stretching hits. The game revolves around a tactical matrix where the pitching player chooses a type of pitch and the batter a type of swing. The result is read off from the matrix which indicates an outcome somewhere between an out and a homer. The drawback is that the players don't represent any player but are simply 'typical'. The two teams supplied



are also identical. For those willing to make a little effort, the game has rules to enable the managers to substitute real statistics on the player cards. This means buying *USA Today* or the *Herald Tribune* and filling in the names and stats of your favourite team. The scope is massive and it is easy to replay any major league game from the regular season, the playoffs or the World Series. The simple rules, complex outguessing and tactical scope of this game make it one of the best face to face games around.



Another basic level game, now unfortunately out of print, is **Superstar Baseball** which allows you to match up Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Mickey Mantle against today's superstars. It also uses an approachable system which results in a fun game.

To conclude the section for rookies we turn to **Strike Out (Trio)**, an excellent introductory game which does not pre-suppose a knowledge of the game itself. The beauty of this game is that you get stand-up figures mounted on bases, and a large playing area on which to place them. Once it has been determined who will bat, both players reveal their respective batting or pitching card; the result will be a die modifier applied to a D6. The total is then read off on either a *Batters Master Card*, or a *Pitchers Master Card*, depending who got the highest total.

The players and ball are then moved on the pitch according to the result. A scoresheet is provided, and like the components generally it is well thought out. Highly recommended for beginners.

Moving up a league now, Avalon Hill produce **Statis Pro Baseball**, which uses the past season's statistics to generate a single card for every player in the majors, over 700 cards in all. This enables the more dedicated player to play entire seasons where the stars will play with their real-life strengths and weaknesses as each one is rated for speed, power, arm strength, fielding, injuries and batting. So Canseco will hit towering home runs while Gooden

throws strikeouts. The game does not use dice, but fast action cards which generate random numbers and codes to decide the multitude of results the game offers. Just about everything is covered from great fielding plays to rain delays. Players can even be ejected or injured as one of the results dictated by the dreaded 'Z' cards which generate all sorts of weird and wonderful events that always seem to happen at the wrong moment. Great fun. Each game takes approximately half an hour including selecting your line-up so in an evening you can cover several games. The game requires some effort to get into and a knowledge of baseball is assumed, but for me it is still one of the best. New player cards are made available each year and the 1987 cards should be out now.

Pennant Race is typical of the third category of games in that you play the general manager of a major league club. The level here is of selecting your pitching rotation and drafting rookies rather than calling the tactical plays. The emphasis is on the front office and not the dugout. Players are rated numerically for power, batting, speed and fielding but are simply factored into a team figure which enables games to be resolved by the roll of six dice. From this, it is obvious that you don't play just one game of **Pennant Race**. The idea is to string whole seasons together while struggling with injuries, trading, losing streaks and the rest. The individual game resolution is so quick that it is possible to play one team's 162 games in a reasonable time but a whole season with all twenty-six teams playing a full schedule is definitely a task for the aficionado. Avalon Hill supply team stats for 1982, '83 and '84 but I haven't seen any of them. It is, however, quite easy to generate the ratings for your favourite years. Overall, the system is fast, enjoyable and is also admirably suited to solitaire play.

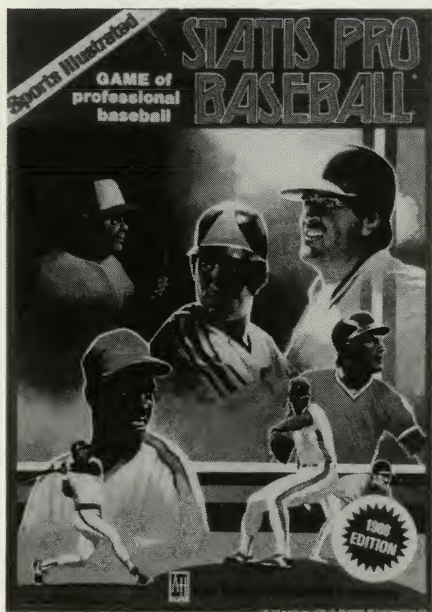
It would be wrong of me to suggest that Avalon Hill are the only suppliers of baseball games, it is simply that they are the most likely to be generally available. For the more adventurous, there are many other companies offering baseball games and simulations among which are those from Strat-O-Matic which use dice and similar cards to **Statis Pro** to produce a quick, accurate game. In the same way that I am a **Statis Pro** fan, there are equally ardent fans of Strat-O-Matic. Others include SPI

Baseball (now only secondhand), **Baseball Challenge** from Tri-Valley, the SherCo baseball simulation, **Spikes High Big League Manager** and the massive APBA system. Each has its own merits and avid followers but to find these more unusual games may require some digging or special imports.

Finally, the boardgame that is widely regarded as 'state of the art' in baseball game design. It is called **Pursue the Pennant** and is really summed up as a combination of all the best parts of the above games. It is a sumptuously produced game and the box cleverly converts, using graphic inserts, into any one of the major league ball parks. The game system is statistic based and covers just about every important facet of the game, especially in handling the crucial difference between left and right handed batters. It is available as an introductory set with some recent All Star players or as the full fledged twenty-six team version. Cards are issued every year and a newsletter is produced for owners of the game. If you can run to the expense, this is the game to get. As for the future, I still believe we haven't seen the ultimate board game – perhaps given the growing knowledge base over here the design may come from the UK?

Not quite a boardgame, but certainly of interest to the baseball fan is the recent news from the States regarding **Starting Lineup Talking Baseball** by Parker Bros. This is a mouth-watering stat-based game that I just have to get hold of. I am told it is a stadium layout with two consoles at either side into which the player cards, and presumably tactical instructions, are plugged. The attraction is that as the plays are resolved, two digitised voices commentate on the action. It sounds brilliant and despite the price, rumoured to be around \$150, I will be looking out for it.

In the same way as I recommended the American Football games last time, I can only suggest you try one of these games and see what it is all about. Certainly if you have an interest in baseball these games will not be a disappointment. Their beauty is that you can second-guess the real life managers, change lineups to the way you want them, decide when to pull your pitcher, pinch hit for your star hitter and everything else that makes baseball the fascinating tactical game it is.



Christmas Cards

INDISCRETION

DESIGNED BY
ALEX RANDOLPH

PUBLISHED BY
PIATNIK

PRICE £5.95

Given the right sort of push this unique concept could be the biggest thing since the last biggest thing. The emphasis has to be on concept rather than cards, for what you get here is a deck of cards. Not just any deck though, for on one side the suits are clearly visible. Hence the title.

At first glance such an idea may seem proposterous to card aficionados, especially poker players, but further inspection will reveal endless possibilities, not just for existing games like Bridge, but also for new ones.

To further this end Piatnik launched a competition last year in which participants were asked to design a game specifically for these indiscreet cards. The winner, Marco Fantini from Italy, received the not inconsiderable sum of \$10,000 for his entry 'Belle Epoque' (rules for which are given at the end of this review). The booklet now provided with the game (though not included with the version available in the UK) contains the rules for the nine best entries including one from occasional GI contributor David Parlett. Inexplicably, these have not yet been translated into English.

What you do get with the English version are two games from Alex Randolph who came up with the original idea for the cards. We tried 'Bonus Malus' which proved to be excellent and ideally suited to the

concept. The object is to take tricks in the normal manner with cards scoring the following: any Spades +10, Hearts +5, Diamonds -5, Clubs -10. Trumps are determined by the top card in the stock pile after hands have been replenished.

The key rule is that if you cannot follow suit then you must trump. As you can see what suits are being held you will gather there is ample opportunity both for skilful card play and the chance to drop somebody firmly in the mire.

A first class game to go with a first class idea.

Permission pending we hope to publish translations of the other entries in future issues of GI. Ideas from readers also welcome.

Brian Walker



BELLE EPOQUE

by Marco Fantini

For four players. Each secretly undertakes to make a certain number of tricks.

Deal 13 cards to each player. Give each player a disc or marker.

The first player leads to a trick. Each trick must contain a card of each suit. Only ranking counts towards winning tricks. If the trick contains more than one card of the same value then the last card played takes the trick.

If you cannot play without duplicating a suit already played then you must discard. If you discard when you could have played a legitimate card and this is spotted by the other players you have to increase the number of tricks you secretly bid at the start by one trick (this is a legitimate play tactic). When a player discards, the discarded cards are kept with the trick face-up for scoring purposes.

Once during the whole game each player can surrender his disc or token. If he does so he automatically takes the trick (if two discs are surrendered at the same time, I suggest priority is given to the player closest to the dealer's left).

The winner of a trick leads to the next.

Scoring

Only the players who were correct in their secret bid score. They get:

- 5 points for each trick taken
- 10 points for each 2 and each 3 in the tricks
- 10 points for each face-up card in the tricks

You play as many rounds as there are correctly bid tricks in the first game.

HOLS DER GEIER

DESIGNED BY
ALEX RANDOLPH

PUBLISHED BY
RAVENSBURGER

PRICE £8.99

'Hols der Geier' is the sort of cry that the natives in Germany emit when they have the misfortune to tread in something dropped by their neighbour's Doberman. It is the sort of thing you could find yourself shrieking while playing this excellent new game from Alex Randolph. Not with disappointment I might add, but more from frustration as you are thwarted by second, and even third guesses.

At the outset each player is dealt cards ranging from 1 to 15 in value. The face down stock cards consist of mouse and vulture cards. The object of the game is to collect the former while avoiding the latter. At the start of a turn one of the stock cards is flipped over. If it is a

vulture card (minus 1 to 5) then the lowest card played takes the trick, while if it is a mouse card (plus 1 to 10) the highest card takes the trick. Cards played are revealed simultaneously. The catch comes with the tiebreaker; in the case of a mouse card the next highest card played takes the trick should there be a tie. The same applies in the case of a vulture card, except here you are trying to avoid such a fate.

At the end of a round the scores are calculated, the winner being the first player to 55 points, an achievement which should take around 30 minutes.



Simple then, but like home delivery pizza it's amazing nobody thought of it before, though according to my colleague Derek Carver somebody did in the form of *Destino*, a now out of print game which was published by Spears (Germany).

The cards are of good quality stock, and like all Ravensburger games the packaging is superb. This is the ideal Christmas party game for 2-5 players.

Brian Walker

Available with an English translation from Just Games (01-437 0761).



BLACK MONDAY

DESIGNED BY
SID SACKSON

PUBLISHED BY
HEXAGAMES

PRICE £8.95

What goes up must go down could well be a maxim for most stock market games, and this latest offering in a card format is no exception to the rule.

The idea for this game was published in one of Sid Sackson's many books on the subject several years ago, and has only recently been published in this

commercial format with a topical theme.

Each player is dealt seven cards representing both a number of shares, and a figure to which the price may fall or rise. He also gets loadsamoney, and yes thank you, I do know that's a *passé* phrase.

The market is depicted by a folding board on which four different industries are represented, together with the minimum and maximum price rise/fall permissible. Unsurprisingly, banking is the most conservative, and high tech the most volatile.

On a turn a player may buy/sell shares, and affect the market price, but he may only play a maximum of four cards and all actions must be performed in sequence: he may not buy, alter the price and then sell. Too easy. Players are therefore required to take some risk

before play gets round to them whereupon they may sell, assuming the price is still right.

If some rotter has reduced the price to zero then your stock is relinquished and you lose a bundle. Surely such a thing could never happen in real life? Not on your Nigel!

After the pack is exhausted the Black Monday is shuffled in and when it reappears the game ends. Players count their cash and the one with the most money gets called a yuppie scumbag.

The game is fun to play and quite skilful when played with three or four; any more and it's pretty random. Not one of Sid's best, though.

Playing time is about 45 minutes, 2-6 players, probably best with four.

Brian Walker

KARRIERE POKER

Based on the Chinese
card game Zheng Shang
You

PUBLISHED BY
HEXAGAMES

PRICE £8.95

The only thing stopping this riotous game getting a five star rating is a rather curious omission: there are no rules for winning! But read on, for the collective brains at *GI* have devised a scoring method to save the day. The object of the game is to carve a niche in a mythical hierarchy: preferably by becoming the boss, but at all costs avoid being the dishwasher. The first player to get rid of all his cards claims the former post, while the last to do so gets scrubbing, or rather shuffling in this case, for he or she has to reshuffle and deal the huge pack. To add insult to injury, you'll find that some thoughtless cads insist on mixing the cards up every which way but up.

Play is very simple, but skilful play has its rewards. Each player receives an equal number of cards, though the dishwasher receives oddments in subsequent rounds. If a player leads, say, three fours, then the next player must also play three of a kind (or pass) providing they are of a higher value. The same rule applies to any grouping, including singles. To have the lead is a considerable advantage as it gives you the opportunity to rid yourself of low cards.

There are signs (with holders) provided to denote the positions, and after each round players change seats (except, of course the boss) according to their new station in life. In keeping with the real world (is this the first dishwashing simulation game?) the bosses now get to 'pick the cherries'.

The boss may demand that the dishwasher gives up the four highest cards in his or her hand in return for four lowly ones. The general manager

may exchange three with the trainee, and so on. It is here though where problems arise should you want a competitive game, rather than a simulation (who'd have thought we'd have a playability vs realism debate here). With the high cards he has just plundered from the ranks, the boss becomes virtually an immovable figure. To add to the problem the rules are vague about winning. Our suggestions are as follows: in an eight player game (the best), each player receives a salary, payable as follows:

Boss	1000
General Manager	900
Manager	800
Department Head	700
Expert	400
Apprentice	300
Trainee	200
'Dishwasher'	100

If the Boss wants cards from the dishwasher he must pay 100 a card (maximum four cards), the general manager likewise pays 100 (maximum of three cards), and so on. The winner under these rules is the first player to amass 5,000, a process which should take about an hour. Adjustments, based on these figures, should be easy to calculate when there are less than eight players involved.

Alternatively, you could award promotion points to players battling their way up the hierarchy in addition to each position receiving a fixed score per turn.

Of course you can play the game for fun, and of that there is plenty, provided you're not doing the washing up.

Brian Walker

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Gone But Not Forgotten

HOW COME SUMMIT WAS CANCELLED?

by Phil Orbanes

The big guy smoking the cigar on your left is looking rather smug. His Chinese bases are scattered over the globe like the measles protecting a prodigious array of mills and factories. The thin man with glasses on your right knows the big guy's next power play will ruin his overseas empire, chasing him back to the Common Market. But the unexpected happens: the women opposite you (Russia and the United States) shake hands on an alliance. All of a sudden, the big guy's cigar smoke doesn't smell so bad after all. You start tapping your fingers with nervous excitement. If you accept his offer of an alliance, your Indian bases will be untouchable (no pun intended). But what if he double-crosses you . . . ?

No, the game is not **Diplomacy**. And it's not **Risk** either. But it's a game born in the same era. Published in 1962 by Milton Bradley, **Summit** offered 3-6 players the chance to shift the balance of world power and win the 'Cold War'. And unlike the other two games, only the application of threats and deterrence settle the outcome, never simulated bloodshed.

Summit was a big game, based on a grand theme. It came in a box larger than **Risk**. Its board (20" x 22" opened) came folded in thirds to fit inside, accompanied by hundreds of plastic playing pieces, lengthy rules, scoresheets, a deck of 'Current Event' cards, and plastic flags used to denote alliances. Its quality was top of the line, its price fair. Its play was unique and often exhilarating. Yet it disappeared in three years.

Why did it fail? I think for two reasons: timeliness and misdirection of 'target market'. **Summit** conferences, the 'Cold War', and 'Imperialism' (the true form of conquest in the game), all lost their commercial punch with the advent of

'peaceful coexistence' and 'détente'. And the game really wasn't a family game, as MB billed it. It was a serious adult game, more advanced than **Risk**.

What, then, makes it worthy of the epitaph 'A great game that didn't make it'? The answer lies in the strategy and tactics needed to play the game: a unique combination of bluffing, double-dealing, long-range planning, and the need to sometimes speak softly when you finally acquired a big stick (lest the others decide to take it away from you). These qualities are timeless. Redressed with different language on the cards, and a new coat of paint on its age-old theme of world conquest, **Summit** could make a grand comeback.

The game is played on a board that divides the world into six home 'Countries' and twelve minor countries. Home countries are worth 10 points, and the lesser countries range in value from 2 to 8 points. The object of play is



to build the highest score by game's end (consisting of points won during play for factories in place around the world and for countries occupied at game's end).

At game's start, each player places 2 bases, 2 mills, and 1 factory in his home country. Thereafter, he starts to take over unoccupied countries by first building one or more bases in each, followed by mills and factories.

Each turn, a player receives 1 'I-Beam' for every mill in his home country and 2

'I-Beams' for every foreign mill. He uses these to construct new bases, mills, and factories (at a cost of 2 I-Beams each). Almost as importantly, a player receives power chips each turn, one for every three units he has per type (a red chip for every three bases – military power – a black chip for every three mills – economic power – and a white chip for every three factories – so-called 'popular' power). The chips are the game's competitive factor.

At the conclusion of each turn, a player can initiate one or more 'Power Plays'. This is done, naturally, to halt the opponents' advances, push them back, and take over some of the minor countries they've entered.

A player could make an economic power play, for example, against Eastern Europe by playing a black chip. The fellow occupying Eastern Europe would now have to match that chip or lose a base there. Once all bases in a country are dismantled, the mills and factories go as well (although some I-Beams are received as compensation, it's a losing proposition). If the chip is matched, the attacker can play another chip of the same colour, or switch colours. When he finishes his power play there, he can attack

another country – and continue to do so as long as his chips hold out, if he so desires – but once used in a power play, chips are returned to the game's supply tray.

The game usually begins calmly. Each player builds his power base, spreads his units carefully and waits the first test of power. After it comes, action hits an enjoyable tempo. Sooner or later, every game creates the equivalent of the big guy with the cigar. Now alliances are essential.

By placing their flags together in the Summit disc, two or more players designate their intentions. As allies, they can come to each other's aid in power plays, build mills and factories in countries protected by each other's bases, and even loan power chips to launch attacks. But, as in **Diplomacy**, alliances are made to be broken and once the balance of power shifts, nature takes its course and the game's fun really begins.

There's another feature of the game that differentiates it from **Risk** or **Diplomacy**: the pack of Current Events cards. From it, a player draws one card on every turn, and follows its instructions (generally, the cards give and take away chips from the player or

his opponents). This luck factor is somewhat disagreeable to armchair strategists, but there is a correlation to the real world in it (remember the sudden oil crisis?). Within this deck are four Census cards. When they turn up, each player scores one point for each home factory, and two for each foreign factory. (Conversion of mills to factories is simultaneously permitted to raise points, but the conversion cannot be later reversed.)

Thus, **Summit** requires that you don't use all your resources to build 'unpopular' military and economic power. The four census scores accumulated during play often spell the difference between defeat and victory. There is another criticism of this pack:

in a game involving 4-6 players (the best kind of game), you really have to go through the deck twice, deleting two Census cards each time, in order to provide sufficient turns for satisfying play. When the deck is exhausted, the game enters its final Summit Round. This is one final turn during which alliances may not be formed (but may be broken if desired). At the end, a final Census is held and points are awarded for all countries conquered.

One of **Summit's** many virtues was this timing factor: the game didn't go on for hours or days on end.

This article first appeared in Games & Puzzles, and is reprinted with permission.

GAMES TO PLAY

by R C Bell (Michael Joseph: £14.95)

The author of this splendid book has possibly the finest collection of old games, in terms of variety, in Britain. They are mostly crammed away in drawers and cabinets in his home (at least they were when I had the privilege of examining them a few years back) and have never, to my knowledge, been publicly shown. This book offers the next best thing: a museum-in-print that includes most of the finest items in his collection; nearly 200 large pages, every one illustrated in full colour. Bell has collected every type of game from all over the world as well as games-related accessories, paintings, fairings and the like and he even has words of advice for the reader on forming a games collection. (Alas, the days of junk-shop treasures are departed, and anyone attempting to match Bell's collection would have to have a very deep pocket indeed.)

So what does the book cover? Race and strategy games, wargames, abstract games (the mancalas are particularly attractive), cards, dominoes, dice, gambling, tinware games – the full gamut. There is also a smattering of commercial games whose selection is curious and is probably dictated by the author's collection. For example, you won't find **Diplomacy**, **Monopoly** or **Scrabble** but you will find the **L'Attaque** group, **Rummikub** and even **Tops**, a domino-related game marketed by

Spears in 1965 which few readers will have heard of. But this is because Bell, despite the reputation he gained as an authority on games based on his *Board and Table Games of Many Civilisations* (published in paperback by Dover) is at heart a collector rather than a games player, and collectors acquire what pleases them.

Following the principle of his *Board Game Book* (now out of print) the author has included a score of 'games to play'. These are provided in the form of a printed board and accompanying rules, the reader furnishing the tokens and dice. However, as more than half the games are presented with the board spread over the left- and right-hand pages, the spine creates a central chasm which ensures that serious, or even frivolous, play is virtually impossible.

The text is generally informative and often most interesting but here the author is a little less sure of himself. For example, he prefers to refer to the castle rather than the rook in chess, he equates Go-moku with Renju, and three of the illustrations for Go are wrongly captioned.

But these minor irritants barely diminish a handsome book most beautifully illustrated. A minor classic and a must-buy, I would hazard, for every dedicated games player.

Book Review

Compared to the average boxed game around offered at the same price, *Games to Play* has to be a bargain, and the ideal Christmas present.

David Pritchard

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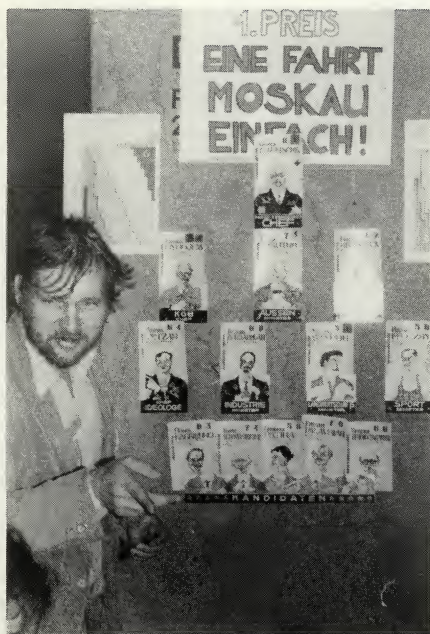
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KREMLIN



The object of Kremlin (reviewed last issue), is to manipulate mythical politicians in the Soviet Politburo with the aim of becoming Party Chief and waving at the October Parade in Red Square.

In its first life Kremlin was designed by Urs Hostettler (pictured above) and published by his company Fata Morgana, in Berne, Switzerland.

In this short feature, Urs describes how he got the idea for the game, and his opinion of the newly released Avalon Hill version.

How does one go about designing a game like Kremlin? It's a question I've been asked on more than one occasion.

Well, it all started one night in March 1985, as I was watching TV at home in Berne. Tschernenko had just waved the long goodbye a few days earlier, and already the silver screen was awash with speculating specialists attempting to predict his successor.

Old man Gromyko was Foreign Minister at the time, and as such, was able to nominate the new Party Chief. The hot money was on Marshal Ustinov

who was just approaching the peak of his career at 80. In the background were two young turks, Gorbachev from Moscow, and Romanov from Leningrad. Both were in their late fifties and thus had a lot to lose should their bid for power fail (you don't get a second chance).

As I was listening I played around with some cards and decided to create my own Politburo, and work out a mechanism that would respect the principles of gerontocracy (the rule of the old), but allow a hidden strategy whereby younger members also stood a chance of gaining power.

I worked on the game system for Kremlin for about one year. Both **Sigma File** (Gibson's), and **Down With the King** (Avalon Hill) were strong influences in terms of game mechanics. At one point we thought of changing the setting to the Vatican, with the Pope taking the place of Party Chief, and visiting foreign countries instead of waving. But then the situation in Moscow changed so dramatically that we wondered if some evil Russian game developer had stolen our ideas; Ustinov died, Romanov was demoted to candidate status, and Gromyko got the heave from the foreign ministry. Thus, **Kremlin** was born.

One of our objectives when designing **Kremlin** was to produce a simulation of Soviet political culture, which is why we place so much emphasis on controlling characters in secret. Thus a player who has been playing very aggressively and dominating the game, can find himself rudely upstaged at the climax when he discovers that the character he thought he was controlling and who has been waving like a Queen, was really controlled by somebody else!

So in this sense it can be seen that our version is much more of a psychological game than the Avalon Hill one; a player can win by simply doing nothing the entire game.

This is not a criticism of the AH version which I know went through a lot of rigorous playtesting. My main qualms were about re-situating the game in the eighties. Originally the game was set in the fifties – the grey era of Soviet politics. My intention was to satirize this period. I don't really think many aspects of the game apply to what Gorby is currently trying to achieve, though this is something of a political point and does not affect play in any way.

As to the game itself, I am inclined to think that their version is more suitable for the American market with its emphasis on action. It can be quite boring to sit around for two hours doing nothing, except revealing victory at the conclusion. But being perverse by nature, how I like to win this way!

But what of the American version? Better? Worse? or merely different? Our editor, who was partially responsible for AH's decision to take the game, describes the Kremlin campaign.

My brief from Avalon Hill was simply to write the character cards for their version. However, their head of development Don Greenwood knew I'd played the game several times in its original form, so sought my advice on some of his proposed rule changes. When I read the first draft for these changes my heart sank. My American colleague Alan R Moon had already seen the changes and had inevitably chimed in with his two-penn'orth. Even so, I wasn't prepared for the changes that Don had wrought. Rightly or wrongly, Avalon Hill had acquired a reputation for making games more complex, merely for the sake of it. At first glance, Don's changes seemed to confirm this view. How wrong can a comrade be? My initial reaction was along the lines of 'why change a winning team?' After all, the game had sold very well in Europe, even with minimal production standards and limited distribution. Some of the changes seemed petty, like changing the

'Kremlin Wall' (under which Soviet heroes are buried) to the 'Graveyard'. To his credit Don later admitted that this was 'dumb' and reinstated the the unique Soviet structure.

Like many who had played the original game I was disappointed to see Anatol Fuckoff and Andrei Pissin purged, but this was expected so no resistance was offered. Don also asked me to come up with some alternative names for the characters as it was felt that the Teutonic humour of the originals would be lost on the English speaking market. I demurred; apart from having a sentimental attachment to Tigran Zenjarplan et al, I felt that they added atmosphere to what was already a 'foreign' game. Attempting to change the names into jokey English ones seemed unnecessary, though I did agree to come up with two to replace Anatol and Andrei. As I didn't hear from Don again on this point I assumed that the originals were to be retained. It wasn't until I saw the finished product that I was aware the names had been changed. My own afterthought contributions had missed the deadline anyway, but who knows, perhaps Betty Boobsky might turn up in a future edition?

TIGRAN 6 0 ZENJARPLAN

+ AUSSEN MINISTERIUM
- KGB

ЦЕНЯРПЛАН ТИГРАН



As to the rule changes, my main concern was the removing of the hidden influence points and being able to win with three different wavers. I felt the effect of this would be to produce a more muddled game, lacking the clarity and the psychological elements of the original. The crux of the argument was that I felt *Kremlin* was essentially a fun game, while Don seemed to be trying to

turn it into an altogether more strategic affair via increased rules.

Then there were the political problems inherent in re-situating the game in the eighties and sticking Gorbachev on the cover. Urs and I were adamant that the game was meant to reflect the Cold War period under Stalin, and was in no way representative of Gorby and *perestroika*. Don countered this by stating that having a recognisable and topical figure on the box would help increase the game's 'saleability': an assertion with which I could never agree.

By now letters were flying backwards and forward across the Atlantic on a daily basis. Superficially it was almost a Hollywood scenario; the creative artists seeing their masterpiece disfigured by a monolithic corporation. But that's a rather pretentious notion; in truth we both knew that Don was working very hard to produce the best possible result for all parties.

Eventually though, our persistence paid off; Don agreed to reinstate the original rules, albeit in a shaded area in the rulebook, a move that had the faint whiff of tokenism, a feeling compounded by

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the somewhat less than complete rules in this section. In addition there were also to be basic and advanced rulebooks which mollified us somewhat. By this time though, my guns were firmly trained on the cover. I felt more strongly about it than Urs, who was more philosophical, remarking that the 'Americans probably understand their market better than us'. Be that as it may,

the Gorby cover has now been ditched in favour of a colourful collection of Soviet iconography, making the game appear less serious. Little wonder Don was to remark later: 'This was the toughest game I've ever worked on'.

But to return to the original question; is **Kremlin** now a *better* game? After all the static I gave Don he'll probably kill

me when I say, yes, I believe it is. In retrospect, I think I probably suffered a knee-jerk reaction to the changes *per se*, rather than the effect of these changes, in my mistaken desire to retain the 'purity' of the original.

Ugh! these words taste awful.

The Kremlin Reshuffle

Declared Influence

The main change from the original is the removal of secret influence; in the original a player could win if he had as much or more *undeclared* influence points in the Party Chief as the player controlling him openly. It is still possible to have the best of both worlds here by adopting the rule that a player can still claim a wave for his faction by declaring influence points equal to, or in excess of the player controlling that politician, immediately prior to phase 8 (Waving at the October Parade). Of course it is also possible to play the game as per the original rules, but bear in mind that in this version declared influence points are not lost if the politician is dispatched to Siberia, something the American rulebook fails to point out.

Three Time Wavers

The second major change is the ability to win if your *faction* has waved three times, irrespective of who did the waving. In the original, the *same* politician had to wave three times for victory to be claimed. The effect of this is to make the game more fluid. In the Swiss version it became very difficult to become a three time waver, especially in a five or six player game.

Siberia I Declare

Losing declared influence points on politicians dispatched to the icy wastes is, at first glance, a fairly radical change. The effect of this should make players more circumspect in their bidding. But

in reality players become power crazed and go the whole hog anyway, thus rendering this change rather less radical than it appears initially.

Tie Breaker

This has to be one of the best changes Don came up with. Ties are now broken by the player with the third highest declared influence points on a particular politician, rather than simply by the player who declared first, though this method is still used in the event of ties unresolved by the first method.

The effect of this is to involve more players in decision making which is always a good thing in any game, but especially this one.

The Options

Optional rule should there be no Party Chief at the end of phase 5 in year eleven: Although this situation does not often occur it can be a problem when it does, as it means that a player controlling the Foreign Minister decides who will win the game by announcing the next Party Chief. Clearly not a satisfactory solution. To resolve this, we suggest that the winner is the faction with the most recorded waves. In the event of a tie then the player controlling the highest ranked politician wins the game.

Jobs For The Boys

The plus and minus signs on the politician cards refer to their suitability for certain offices. We seldom used this in the original but that was more due to the fiddliness of constantly changing ages, but more relevantly it was so

difficult to get anyone to wave three times, let alone make sure that your men had the jobs. Now both these factors have been eliminated this option seems a good one since it makes the promotion phase considerably more strategic.

Adding Influencing Points

Should be considered mandatory rather than optional.

The Intrigue Cards

Difficult to decide about the usefulness of these. Certainly they add uncertainty and make for a more fluctuating game, but rather at the expense of planning. The blackmail cards are not my cup of vodka at all, though this is more to do with my distaste for games where you have to strike bargains with players.

Historical Revolutionary Variant

This is the new expansion kit released by Avalon Hill featuring historical politicians. So a big hello to Josef Stalin. The concept of having real politicians who are replaced by mythical politicians when they die is indeed a wonderful one. Unfortunately it simply doesn't work. The main problem is one of age. Uncle Joe checks in at 44, so no matter how much purging he does you can be sure it will be a long time before he checks out.

Likewise Leon Trotsky (45), and Nikita Krushchev (30). The suggestion I would make is that you add 30 to the ages of the 'real' politicians.

Lets hope I don't end up eating these words as well.

Desert Island Games

Castaway Alan Moon chooses which games he'd take to the legendary desert island – and almost sinks the life raft!

For starters, let me make it perfectly clear that while I was born in Southampton and lived the most formative years of my life, ages 1–6, in England, I am an American. As such, you will understand why I can't count, deficit spending and credit cards being the way over here. What I mean is, I'm not sure how many games are on my list. I can count to five okay using one hand, but after that I always forget whether I'm supposed to use the other one, my toes, my ears, or what.

You should also know that if I had written this six months ago, no European games except **1829** (Hartland Trefoil) would have appeared on the list because I didn't know about any of them. Brian Walker has corrected this fault and at last count over 70 European games are on display in my bookcases.

Finally, before I get to the important part of this harangue, be assured that I'd miss the boat which would eventually land me on the island in the first place. I mean, how could I say good-bye to the 800+ games I'd decided not to take?

But on to the chosen few. **6-Tage Rennen** (Holtman VIP) has become my all-time favorite game in last few months, but I'd only take it if there were going to be at least six or seven other castaways. Since several decks of cards would be available, either having been thoughtfully brought along or been miraculously washed up on shore, the game could even handle as many as 10–12 players. The same qualification applies to **Football Strategy** (Avalon Hill). With enough players to form a league, and something to bet with (besides our lives), this game becomes

the ultimate psychological, one-on-one challenge. My days in the Avalon Hill Strategy League taught me both humility and the true thrill of victory. (*In my recent experience I saw no evidence of the former, while there was hardly any opportunity for the latter – Ed*)

Schoko & Co (Schmidt Spiele), **Die Macher** and **Greyhounds** (Hansim Gluck), and **Wildlife Adventure** (Ravensburger) are next in line. **Schoko & Co** is simply the best business game ever, though it might be hard to play without activating some severe cravings. **Die Macher** may be the best election game ever, and makes a lot more sense than most real German elections. Ravensburger probably expected **Wildlife Adventure** to appeal primarily to children, but it is a tremendously strategic game full of bluff and revenge. Much too clever to be left to kids. I could add the island's location to the map and myself as another nearly extinct animal.

Doolittle & Waite (Inward Games) is an American game but it deserves to be included in the foreign select few because I would never have known about it if not for Brian. The advantages of this game are it is equally as good with any number from two on up and it brings out the best, creatively and humorously, in the participants.

I don't really like monster games, but since I'd have the time to become familiar with one, **World in Flames** (Australian Design Group, the latest edition), with laminated components to keep the sand out over the months it has to remain set up, gets the nod.

The northern board of **1829** would definitely go. As many times as I've played this, I've never seen the same game twice. Better yet, this is one of

those games that thrives on being played by the same group over and over. **Titan** (AH) is another must, necessary for those days when the urge to roll some dice would hit me. **1829** and **Titan** both allow and even emphasise the revenge motive, which I often find just as enjoyable as winning, especially after several games with the same players. These two used to be first and second on my hit parade before the German invasion. Now **6-Tage Rennen** and **Schoko & Co** have edged ahead slightly.

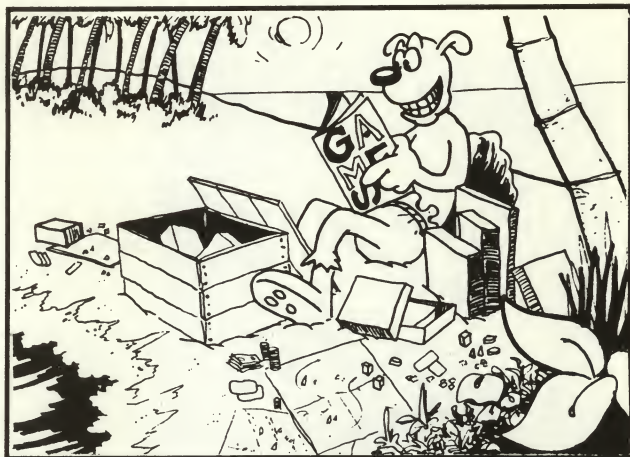
I'd want at least one classic, so I'd briefly consider **Monopoly** and **Careers** (Parker Bros), but I'd decide on **Totopoly** (Waddingtons) as a sentimental choice. Some of my greatest childhood memories are of playing this game with my family.

The remainder would come from a group including **Britannia, 1776**, **Russian Campaign**, **Caesar Alesia** and **Dune** (AH); **Viceroy**s (Task Force, with my double-size map and redone cards); **Blue & Grey Quads** (SPI); **7th Fleet** (Victory Games); **Fury of Dracula** (GW); **Maritim** (Edition Perihun); and **Energie Poker** (ASS).

As a footnote, for any of you who own **Six Day Race** or **Greyhounds**, I have a revised set of English (American?) rules of each. If you're interested, just drop me a line and I'll be glad to send you a copy: Alan R Moon, 11 Broadway, Apt 1, Beverly, MA 01915.

Oops, I almost forgot. Am I allowed to take my Apple computer? (*If it'll help you count any better, yes – Ed*)

In the next issue, flying Scotsman Ellis Simpson gets grounded, with only ten games and a copy of Kenneth McKellar's Greatest Hits for company.





ESSEN GAMES FAIR

27th–30th October 1988

REPORT & PHOTOS:
Brian Walker

Why Essen? I have been asked this many times. After all, 'essen' in German means eating: an activity not exactly synonymous with the playing of games.

Like many things, it all started long, long, ago, in a time when the Burghers and just plain folk of the Ruhr were so skint they couldn't even afford a litre at the local. In an effort to bring some joy into their threadbare life-style they took both to inventing and playing games. So what more obvious choice for Friedhelm Merz and his organisation when a site was sought for the first Games Fair back in '82?

Little could they have known then what they were about to unleash. The first Fair, Spiel '82, staged in one of the local halls, attracted a mere 2000 or so souls. Spiel '87, now in the massive Grugahalle attracted an attendance of 65,000, while early reports suggest that figure has been surpassed at Spiel '88, further evidence of the continuing renaissance that the German games industry is currently undergoing. Little wonder that enterprising English companies like Silver Bear (**Bottom Line**), 3 Wishes (**Elixir**), and Present Games (**Nessie Hunt**), have taken to producing completely German editions of their games.

Block Mania

The first day provides no hint of the mayhem to come. The attendance is no more than respectable for a Thursday but at least this means there is sufficient

breathing space to talk to some of the designers, one of the happiest of whom must have been Klaus Zoch, whose game **Bausack** was one of the hits of the show and quickly sold out. Superficially the game is similar to **Timber** (Paradigm) insofar as it revolves around a set of wooden building blocks. The blocks arrive in a stylish sack (hence the title), and the rules present four games. The most entertaining of these appears to be **Knock Out**. Each player has to construct an edifice, the like of which would send Prince Charles into a royal froth. The catch is, you are given chips to bid for the piece which comes up for auction. Should you have no chips left then you can be forced to take something which can only be added to your building with the greatest difficulty. One by one the structures collapse to general merriment all round. The winner is the last player to have a building standing. The components, made of different coloured wood, are really quite beautiful, as is the overall presentation. Klaus explains to me that he just sells the game from home and cannot make a competitive price for the shops.

Bausack sells for a remarkable £15.00. Interested parties should write to: Klaus Zoch, Gunterstalstr. 32, 7800 Hamburg. But no English rules as yet.

There aren't many new games at Essen as most of the major companies launch their range at Nuremberg in February. One game of interest is **Lieber Barisch Sternen** which concerns a spot of bother in Bavaria circa 1800. Lest this sounds a

trifle esoteric for your taste it might be worth noting that the game was designed by Karl-Heinz Schmiel, who produced the stunning election game **Die Macher**, and then, just to show his versatility, brought out **Suppenkasper** for Mattel, an hilarious game about calories, where the object is to remain the perfect weight while others gorge themselves into oblivion, or starve themselves into anorexia. A great shame Mattel UK haven't taken up the option on this, or in fact on any of their German cousin's splendid range. Surely the markets can't be that different?

Spielfreaks Unlimited

The games fleamarket which dominated the centre of the hall last year is sadly no more. Instead, the purveyors of these unsung treasures have been forced to take stands on which to hock their wares. The net outcome of this is that there are now far fewer games available. Most of the jewels are snapped up on the first day, though there is a consistent supply of 3M and early Avalon Hill titles. **Blue Line Hockey** from the former fetches £50, while classics such as **Executive Decision** go for a snip at £30.

One 'new' game which does make an appearance to general astonishment is **Family Business**, the classic card game from Mayfair, now licensed and splendidly repackaged by Spielfreaks Ltd, a company formed for the purpose by Eamon Bloomfield from Games Unlimited. Eamon tells me that this is

merely the first of a series of gems to which he has acquired the rights and intends to publish utilising only the best components. If his first release is anything to go by this is definitely a venture worthy of your support.

All is joy on the ASS stand where Klaus Tauber, one of the new generation of German designers, is receiving the award for 'Game of the Year' for his **Barbarossa**, an accolade which rescued the publishers from a deep trough. The game should be making its way over here soon and will be reviewed in these pages upon its arrival.

Trouble in Toytown

Kings of Europe, though, are Ravensburger, who sell games like MacDonalds sell hamburgers, though fortunately they are better quality (the games, that is). Sales of **Scotland Yard** are now well over the one million mark. The extraordinary thing is that it was a hair-line decision to publish, as the powers that be felt it was a little too different from their usual products. Their range this year was a little on the lightweight side, though the presentation was immaculate as usual. The Sid Sackson game **Das Erbe von Maloney** was a disappointment, possibly as a result of too much tampering, while **Elefantenparade** was the starter for the main course that never came. Their card game **Hols der Geier** (see review) is quite wonderful though very similar to **Destino**, a game put out by Spears (Germany), a few years back.

A strange rumour concerning Ravensburger reaches my ears. Nothing new in that, except this one has the unusual distinction of being true. A few months ago the hierarchy decided that they'd had enough of the nonsense of displaying the designer's (or author's, as they are referred to in Germany) name on the boxes. Why, they argued, should they advertise the likes of say, Sid Sackson, when he is not under exclusive contract and free to sell his wares to their rivals. Our business is selling Ravensburger, they argued. After all, in the book trade it would be unheard of for authors to have two books published simultaneously by different publishers. So went the logic. Uproar from the authors. After a meeting of the latter it was decided that no new games would be offered to Ravensburger until the

plan was dropped, which it was a few weeks later. Power to the proles. It seems quite extraordinary that Ravensburger should try to implement such a idea in the first place knowing the sensitivity of the designers on whom they depend, and many whose names lend not just prestige, but sales to their products. The attempt to draw a parallel with the book trade is disingenuous. Writers get signing on fees, and working expenses, both of which are unheard of in the games business.

Designer Notes

If Ravensburger are the single most successful games company, then the most successful designer, both commercially and aesthetically, must be Wolfgang Kramer. Last year his trucking game **Auf Achse** won the Game of the Year award for F X Schmidt and netted sales of a quarter of a million. His previous credits include the wonderful **Wildlife Adventure**, **Heimlich & Co** and the much sought after **Nikki Lauder's Formula Eins**, which Wolfgang tells me is to be republished next year, along with **Coup**, another classic of his. In addition to these he has three brand new games which will be hitting the shelves next year, all of which, he tells me, will be worth waiting for. An exceptionally polite and modest man, you can take him at his word.

Cycling News

Following the cult success of **6-Tage Rennen** (reviewed last issue) a search is conducted for the publishers, Holtman VIP. Alas, they are nowhere to be

found, but a strange-but-true story reveals the reason for their non-appearance; they are not a games company! The game was merely a promotional device for pursuing their true goal in life, ie promoting cycle races of the duration stated in the game's title. The game was designed by one of their employees!

A million games inventors eat their collective hearts out.

That's the bizarre news. The good news is that the company has now been contacted and Just Games expect to take delivery of the game within the month. So be patient. Another cycling game attracting attention is **Ronde de Frankrijk**, a Dutch game featuring the largest score sheet I have ever seen. A translation is promised soon. No sign of another Dutch game, the legendary **Homas Tour**, but good news about another classic, **Das Favorit**: this super card game is almost certain to be republished next year.

Barbie Doll Bonanza

The Fair closes each night at 9pm but the fun doesn't stop there, as the games continue in bars, hotels, and restaurants throughout the city. On an adjoining table in our eatery the Mattel crowd, led by Master of the Universe (and product manager) Roland Siegers, are playtesting a new card game which seems to involve standing up and making animal noises, much to the disgruntlement of our fellow diners.

Saturday is tournament day, with competitions being staged for Bernd Brunhoffer's motor racing game **PS**, the



Glittering prizes at the Interteam '88 tournament

first prize for which is a remote controlled model Formula One car, as Murray Walker (no relation) would say: 'This is incredible!'. A few hairpin bends away the **Kremlin** tournament run by the game's designer Urs Hostettler is just about to start. The winner receives the somewhat dubious prize of a one way train ticket to Moscow, and no, the second prize is not two tickets.

Interteam '88

The main event was the first Interteam tournament; sixteen teams from all over Europe comprising four players each. You'll doubtless be enthralled to learn that GI fielded a team led by yours truly, and which included Philip Murphy, whose jottings you may have noted in our role-playing section.

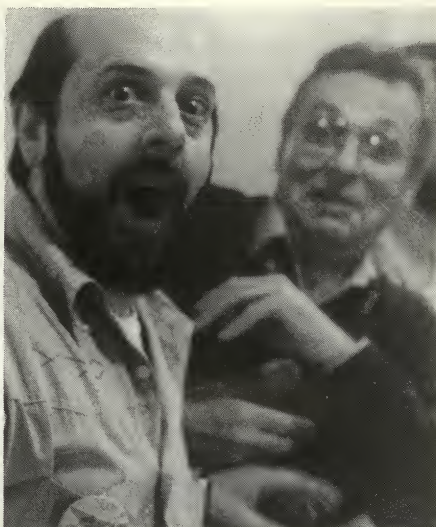
We were quite happy simply to compete; imagine our surprise therefore when we learned that along with the teams from Belgium, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, and the USA, we would be paid 115 DM (about £38) *each*. That's right, getting paid to play games, which certainly makes a change from not getting paid for writing about them.

Each team member had to play one game each of **Acquire**, published by Schmidt Spiele in Germany; **Hare and Tortoise** (though it is known as **Hare and Hedgehog** in the German edition); **Cluedo** ('It was Colonel Mustard, I swear!'), and a new card game published by Piatnik: **Indiscretion**, which features ten variants by the world's top designers. For the competition we had to play **Bonus Malus** by Alex Randolph.

Points were scored according to position, and I'm sure you're all just dying to know we finished a respectable eighth and would have achieved a much higher placing were it not for a lamentable performance by a certain member of the team who shall remain nameless.

The winning outfit came from a Hamburg games club, with the Swiss team coming second.

Following the tournament, the games, which had generously been provided by the manufacturers, were sold off in packs of four to the competitors for 50



Flying Turtle Captain Jean Vanaise gets a short sharp shock

DM (£16). In addition, all members of the first ten teams received a game of their choice.

Everybody agreed the tournament was a great success, though I felt mein hosts took it rather too seriously. Next year the competition is to be expanded and should include a greater choice of games, so start swotting now.

X-Rated

Over to the Das Spiel stand now. This Hamburg based company is one of the best known games shops in Germany, though their stand is bereft of home grown product. Their speciality is importing and translating English and American games. A large selection of American wargames is kept discreetly under the counter, rather like the X-rated videos at your local newsagent.

By way of a memorial there is also a large display of releases from the defunct Italian company International Team (RIP), famous for their beautiful looking games and hopeless rules. It's always surprised me that they didn't team up with some of the American companies whose products were very often the converse.

Also on the stand is retired trainspotter David Watts, busy promoting two new maps for his evergreen **Railway Rivals**, and also premiering **Slick**, a new share dealing game about the oil business.

English Not All Hooligans Shock

Most of the other English contingent are sharing a massive stand which is unfortunately, though appropriately, located behind a double decker bus and resplendent with Union Jack flags. No shorts though. Despite the location there is no lack of punters many of whom are soon attempting to find the monster in **Nessie Hunt**, while others indulge in an **Orgy**, or find themselves in a **Digital Dilemma**. The latter, along with Jeremy Shaw's other game **Trinity**, (both published by Intellectual Pursuits) attract high praise from their German rivals, and neither would look out of place in Habitat. Also present amongst the Union Jacks is the inevitable Mike Lorrigan, busy promoting **Capital Adventure**, though the locals look understandably baffled when asked to name the first head of the BBC. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of players. Mike vows to have a translated version ready for next year's fair.



'Showbiz' star Derek Carver (centre) shares a joke with Hexagames product manager Joe Nikisch (left) and Spielfreak Ernst Knauf

Representing the magazine of post-human astrology, *Games Monthly*, is earthman David Pritchard (star sign: Libra). In a previous life (same star sign though) David used to be the editor of *Games and Puzzles*. David is also impressed by the high quality of the home grown product, and we both lament the fact that the UK seems incapable of staging an event similar to the one we are now witnessing. Lest anyone think that the Fair deals only with boardgames it might be worth pointing out that there is also a snooker tournament, complete with a resident pro; a chess competition with the chance to play against one of Germany's Grandmasters; a backgammon tournament in which they unaccountably wouldn't let me play; and last but not least a competition of the ancient Indian game, Carrom.

Heavy Metal Magic

Fantasy games are a growing force in the German market but are still minuscule when compared to their boardgame brothers. Of the majors, Schmidt Spiele are the company

showing most interest in this market and have already licensed Avalon Hills *Wizard's Quest* with some success. On the figures front the busiest stand belonged to Hobby Products and their beautifully detailed **Metal Magic Miniatures**. These are undoubtedly the market leaders in Germany and judging by the reaction here it's easy to see why. In the UK they are distributed by Hobby Games and it can only be a matter of time before they achieve a similar status here.

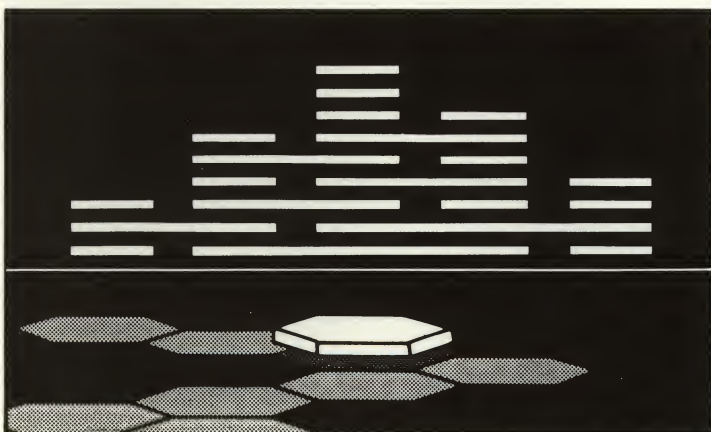
Vodka ist Verboden

In case you hadn't noticed it's Sunday already, so over to the **Kremlin** championship where the proceedings have appropriately ended on a satirical note. The winner of the tournament turned out to be a professional officer in the German Army, and, as such, he is forbidden to go to the Soviet Union by law, let alone take a one-way ticket to Moscow. A compromise is reached when he agrees to the more sedate prize of a ski-ing holiday in Switzerland instead, providing the *après ski* aperitif isn't vodka, of course.

The crowds are surging in now in such numbers as to make an average Royal Wedding look like a bus queue. It's virtually impossible to get on a stand let alone play a game. Younger members of the family have arrived and are having a great time destroying the Milton Bradley stand. Their **Inkognito** game manages to survive the onslaught and protect its title as the 'Best Looking Game of the Year'. Rumour has it that it will be afforded a UK release next year, but the MB staff are, er, incommunicado when asked for confirmation.

The show closes at 6pm tonight and at 5.55pm the crowds are still buying games by the boatload. As Phillip Todd from the newly formed European Games Association points out, 'The Germans really love to play games'. And with such a wealth of treasures on offer, who can blame them?

Spiel '89 takes place in Essen, October 19 - 22. Yes, in 1989. Don't miss it.



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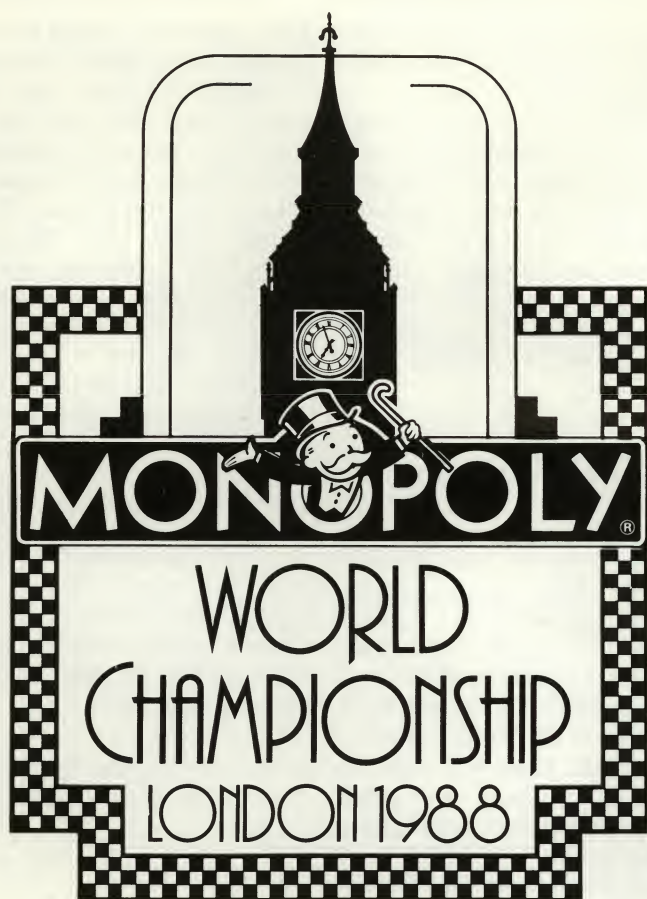
Use the profits from your war chest, to **raid the shares of an opponent's company** or to defend yourself from a raid. The best defence is an offence, it generally pays to make the right moves first. However, everyone will be singing the Wall Street Blues if a Market Meltdown hits and wipes out the value of your shares.

The key rules to the game appear on the board. This leaves your mind free to think about strategy.

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Nightmare on Vine Street: Nippon's Revenge

The 8th Monopoly World Championship took place at the Park Lane Hotel from Thursday 13th October through to Monday 17th.

The opening day saw the launch of the Million Dollar Monopoly Set, a 23 carat

bejewelled board with solid gold pieces made by Californian Sydney Mobell and insured by Lloyds for \$2m. Lloyds were taking no chances either, for the set was closely guarded the entire weekend by a gentleman of sufficiently ample proportions to deter all but the most

foolhardy from attempting to half inch a solid gold top hat, or a similarly valuable old boot.

The contestants arrived from all over the world the next two days in preparation for the finals on the Sunday. In a spectacular bid to conform to national stereotype the Italian champion was late.

The bookies' favourite was reigning World Champion Jason Budd at 3-1, though my money was on Trinidad's Gillian Lucky, and UK champ Mike Grabsky, with names like those...

Saturday saw the arrival of former Prime Minister Edward Heath who confessed to 'learning the rules in the afternoon'. My suggestion that he should try to buy the power station ASAP was taken with good grace.

Certainly no expense had been spared to ensure the glamour of the occasion: champagne was *de rigeur* and the food plentiful. If only more games companies would realise just how much such hospitality enhances one's view of their products, then I'm sure they'd send a crate of champagne with every review copy.

Just as I was thinking how nice it was to have the bar to myself, what should ride in but a posse of thirsty hacks from the Street of Shame. Fortunately they were mostly photographers, so there were no headlines the following day of the 'My Night of Shame in Mayfair Vice Den by Monopoly Champ' variety. They also had the good manners not to snigger when I pulled out my Brownie 127.

The skill/luck ratio in Monopoly has always been a source of some argument, so I asked some of the players what they thought. The French champion looked the brainy sort so what did he think? Come in Marc Fernandez: 'I really think it is about 75% skill' he proclaimed. UK champ Mike Grabsky concurred, though added a qualifier: while he thought that the figure was 'about right' he suggested that it only really applied when you were playing with your family or friends, or with people who don't know what they are doing. 'If you are playing with experienced players then the luck factor is much higher' he added.

Luck or not, eventually all but five contestants passed GO for the last time



leaving us with the finalists: Ken Shabtay (Israel), Roger Edblom (Sweden), Carmen Santiago (Puerto Rico), Tony Andrews (New Zealand), and from Japan Ikuo Hiyakuta (pronounced Ikuo Hiyakuta).

The turning point of the final came after 40 minutes when Carmen Santiago rejected the opportunity to acquire the orange group by trading with Ikuo, preferring instead to trade with Israeli champ Ken Shabtay and acquire the dark blue properties.

After 2 hours 22 minutes the Japanese emerged triumphant showing no signs whatsoever of inscrutability, but then who would if they'd just been handed \$15,140 in greenbacks. That figure, by the way, is the exact amount to be found in a **Monopoly** bank.



All that was left was the unveiling of the first Russian **Monopoly** set. Using the Cyrillic alphabet many of the game's features have been adjusted in line with life in the USSR. Hence, 'Life Insurance' simply becomes 'Insurance', while dollars have been replaced by roubles. Negotiations are still taking place concerning sales of the hitherto illegal game in Russia. So if you are planning a quick killing on the black market with a few smuggled sets then you'd better call Aeroflop right now.

But you'd be a better man than me Gunga Din.

The Competing National Champions

COUNTRY	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION
Arabian Gulf	Pradeep Bhatia	12	Student
Australia	Greg Jacobs	37	Estate Agent
Austria	Thoma Alexander	23	Student
Belgium	Jean Jacques Van Aken	26	Sales Rep.
Canada	Cara Buffet	10	Schoolgirl
Cayman Islands	David James	41	Law School Director
Chile	Tulio Astudillo	38	Journalist
Columbia	Dora Molina	25	Hotel Administrator
Finland	Akki Huttenen	20	Soldier
France	Marc Fernandez	30	Electronics Specialist
Germany	Hans Meyer	31	Journalist
Holland	Robert Kuyper	42	Broker
Hong Kong	Irene Leung	26	Banker
Ireland	Tommy Glynn	22	Accountant
Israel	Chen Shabati	13	Student
Italy	Francesco Catania	29	Banker
Japan	Ikuo Hiyakuta	36	Trading Company Employee
Mexico	Salvador Sandoval	20	Law Student
New Zealand	Tony Andrews	37	Company Director
Norway	Henning Roscheberg	20	Insurance Admin.
Peru	Mauricio Valencia	24	Lawyer
Puerto Rico	Carmen Arroyo	28	Salesperson
Singapore	Chan Kah Kiong	15	Student
Spain	Angel Martin	32	Market Researcher
Sweden	Roger Edblom	17	Student
Switzerland	Peter Bronniman	25	Computer Programmer
Trinidad	Gillian Lucky	21	Law Student
UK	Mike Grabsky	32	Company Director
US	Gary Peters	48	Mortgage Banker
World Champion	Jason Budd (UK)	28	Driving Instructor



SNIPER

ALL THE
GOSSIP THAT'S
FIT TO PRINT

FAWLTY

Those of you planning to visit Essen next year should take care with your choice of hotel. One establishment that will not be making it into the GI Gamers Guide to Luxury Hotels of the World is the Hotel Eulle. On the second morning of my stay they decided I'd played enough games for one week and locked me in my room, a ploy of which some of my future ex-colleagues expressed approval.

Only my pitiful cries from the balcony to a few sympathetic citizens below ensured my release. To add insult to injury they then presented me with a bill for the five days I had intended to stay, and demanded payment *sehr schnell*.

Coincidentally (?) the night before my departure for the Fatherland, BBC-TV showed the Fawlt Towers episode of featuring the Germans. Satellite TV, you have a lot to answer for.

SUPREME COMMANDER

From Essen it's off to Toronto with my colleague Philip Murphy, to visit, amongst others, Supremacy supremo Robert Simpson. Inevitably he is working on another expansion kit for the game. One of the questions he gets asked most, and which I repeat for the benefit of readers, is: 'What is the best way to play the game given the host of options available in the Field Commander's Handbook?'

Bob plays a straight bat: 'The book is really meant to be taken as a menu. You simply choose what you like.' I assure him we will be running a feature on the most effective and concise rules in a future issue. My life spared, we take a tour of this sprawling city during which Bob proves to be the perfect host.

Strangely enough one of the first sights we visit is a games shop called Games-A-Lot. Unfortunately, what they don't have a lot of is home grown product. Indeed the only box bearing

the legend 'Made in Canada' is something calling itself **Market Madness**, which on closer inspection turns out to be exactly the same game as **Stock Market Madness** which was published by the American company Yaquinto some ten years ago.

Back to Supremacy Inc: apart from expansion kits their next game is likely to be a two-player abstract game, though not for some time yet.

BLUE MOON

A short drive over the border to Buffalo and then on to Boston via US Air, an airline I can heartily recommend, especially to non-swimmers. No sooner have we taken off and are peering down at the Great Lakes below us, than the pilot advises us that what we are sitting in is not merely a seat but an 'approved flotation device'. Great. So when you dive-bomb into the water at 600mph it's no sweat. Just pull the cord and it's hello sailor. Bon Voyage.

The purpose of this trip is to visit our American Desk Alan R Moon in Beverly, MA. After seeing a photograph of Alan in our last issue, one of our readers wanted to know how come the desk was made of tin. A good question, but you really have to meet him to resolve the answer.

Fellowwriter Mike Siggins has joined us now and together we intend to storm The North Shore Games Club, a Moon stronghold, where we aim to show the members just how games should be played. Not unexpectedly, the meeting turns out to be one of the rowdiest on record. This is due in most part to a particularly noisy game of **Karriere Poker** (see review), in which, true to life, all the 'aliens' end up in the kitchen.

Try as he might, poor old blue Moon cannot win a game for love nor money. To give him credit though, the club is one of the best I've visited. A great bunch of guys and a wide variety of games. To compliment this Alan

publishes an excellent, and highly imaginative newsletter to which subscribers are welcome (see address under Desert Island Games).

GRiM'S GUIDE

Ever the masochist, one of the first thing I read upon my return is an editorial in GRiM (Games Review Monthly, to newcomers) waffling on about their 'review guidelines.'

No sooner have I finished reading, than what should mysteriously turn up on my desk but a copy of the guidelines themselves! Given the contents, the parts that are comprehensible that is, they could easily be titled The Beginners Guide to Unadulterated Sycophancy as the following paragraph illustrates: 'Every product has some virtues, even if these are not the virtues the publisher may necessarily have wished to be paramount'(?). Or how about this as an example of consumer journalism? 'If a game is genuinely dire beyond description it will not be reviewed. If there are major flaws in the system the review will be referred back to the publisher'.

In the introduction to the guidelines GRiM comes over all philosophical, but inevitably gets confused: 'While we accept that in some instances the differences between an opinion and a judgement may be small, the distinction is important not just because it reflects a reality but because it (*sic*) the expression of an approach to reviewing which we wish to encourage.'

In keeping with the festive spirit, we offer a free copy of **I Think, You Think** to anybody who can tell us what this actually means, and a free subscription to all to the runners up. The winning entries will be published.

In case you are wondering what our review guidelines are, quite simply, we don't have any.



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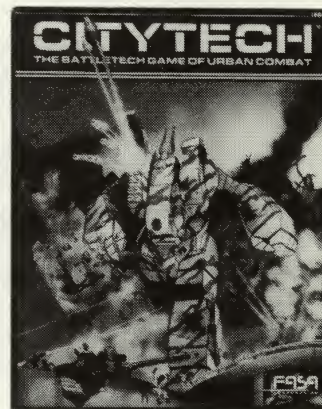
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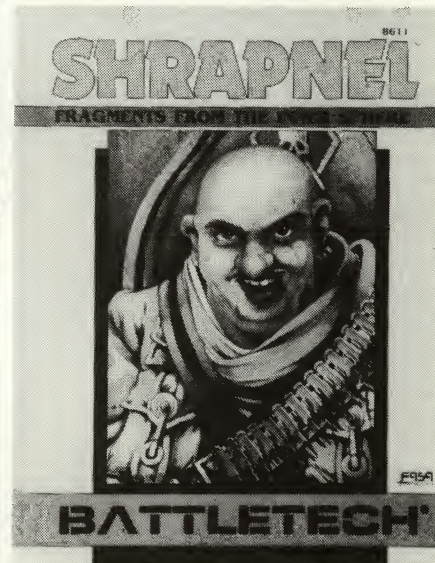
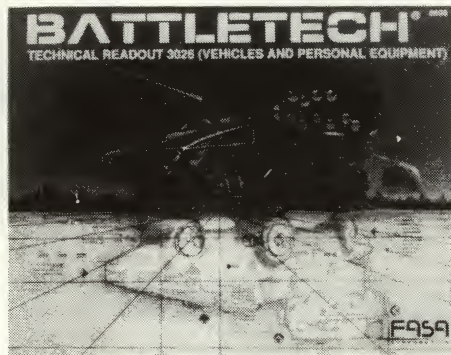
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LOST IN SPACE

There has been much speculation as to where in the Universe GDW's **Space 1889** has got to. Originally this was due to be launched at the Origins show in Milwaukee back in August. Since then there have been rumours of production problems, oriental sabotage, and a nuclear attack on Bloomington (GDW HQ). To clarify the situation we spoke to GDW head honcho Marc Miller:

Straight up Marc, what's the game?.

'Well, a lot of people thought we were having trouble in the Orient getting the plastic pieces made but that's not true. What we were dealing with were a couple of *American* jerks who just didn't know what they were doing.

'They kept promising and promising. Finally I drove 1000 miles to visit them and find out what was going on. It took me about 2 minutes to realise they were just screwing up, so I grabbed the moulds and headed back. They are now in the hands of *professionals* who have been working night and day to get the job finished.

'The upshot is that the first game in the series, **Sky Galleons of Mars**, will be shipped on November 28. The role-

NEWS

playing system is still on schedule for a January release.'

Marc went on to confess it had been a pretty 'lean year' for GDW. 'The problem was we had a guy working for us who was not really up to it, so some things went out which subsequently we were not very happy with, and that hurt us'.

But surely your reputation in the hobby is such that you could withstand a few brickbats?

'Well, we'd like to think so'. If advance sales for **Space 1889** are anything to go by, they've got nothing to worry about.

GAMESMASTER R.I.P.

Milton Bradley are not planning to release any more games in their much praised Gamesmaster series, *writes our American Desk*. Games like **Axis and Allies**, **Fortress America** and **Shogun**

became popular with both hobbyists and the more casual buyer because of the outstanding production quality, which featured a cast of hundreds of plastic miniatures. Unfortunately, they did not become popular enough to justify either these production costs, or the development time spent on the projects.

Sales were around the 70,000 per year figure. Respectable enough for most companies but peanuts for MB, who look for sales of 400,000 per annum on most of their products.

MB have bad news for Trekkies too; their planned boardgame **Star Trek: The Next Generation** has been cancelled due to retailer apathy.

SHOE NEWS

West End Games have moved from New York City to Pennsylvania.

The primary business of the owner of West End is shoes, so when the shoe company moved to PA the games company had to hotfoot it also. Undoubtedly a well heeled company, but pity the poor soles who have to toe the line after highstepping it in the Big Apple (*somebody must have laced the desk's drink - Ed.*).

VIRGIN GAMES TOP 10 WARGAMES

- 1) **Battletech** (FASA)
- 2) **Barbarossa** (GDW)
- 3) **Harpoon** (GDW)
- 4) **Imperium Romanum** (West End)
- 5) **Combined Arms** (GDW)
- 6) **Centurians** (FASA)
- 7) **Star Fleet Battles Vol 1** (Task Force)
- 8) **Star Warriors** (West End)
- 9) **Battleforce** (FASA)
- 10) **Air Superiority** (GDW)

THE YEAR SO FAR

WARGAMES

SEVENTH FLEET
(*Victory Games*)
Welcome addition to the fleet series.

AIR SUPERIORITY
(*GDW*)
Excellent game of modern warfare well up to GDW's usual standard.

LEE vs GRANT
(*Victory Games*)
Another outstanding design from master of the genre Joe Balkoski (reviewed last issue).

DRIVE ON FRANKFURT
(*Counterattack magazine #1*)
Quite simply the best game to appear in a magazine ever.

WARGAMES

ANGOLA

DESIGNED BY
PHIL KENDALL

PUBLISHED BY
RAGNAR BROTHERS
PRODUCTIONS

PRICE £12.95

Games from any publisher apart from the big, professional firms are few and far between, so it is with interest that I review *Angola*, a new release from a group of gamers in the Huddersfield area. Because of this pedigree, *Angola* is what I would term a 'third world' game. It is designed by enthusiasts, has non-professional graphics and printing and comes, reasonably priced, in a ziplock bag with uncut counters. Where these games can lose out is that they don't have much shelf appeal compared to the luxuriously packaged professional games, but this doesn't mean they are bad games. In fact the trend is quite the opposite, as this type of game often boasts innovative and clever design with good playability.

DAY-GLO

On first sight of the game, the immediate inclination is to grab a pair of sunglasses. This game is loud. The rulebook cover is bright yellow, the map does a passable imitation of a Dulux paint chart, and the counters are rendered in some interesting Day-Glo shades. Not knowing much about multi-colour printing, I wonder how easy it would be to use more restrained colours instead of the bright ones we

have here? I would guess that this isn't too much more expensive, and the appearance would benefit no end.

HISTORICAL DETAIL

Appearance aside, the game is unusual on several counts. The subject matter, to my knowledge, has not been tackled before. It covers the wars for control of Angola in the mid-seventies which involved not only the domestic forces, but also those of South Africa, Zaire and Cuba. The forces involved are the FNLA and UNITA western-backed alliance against the soviet-equipped FAPLA and MPLA forces. The rules suggest four players as ideal but we found no problems with two or three. There are even basic, but workable, rules for solitaire play. I would have found a brief summary of the causes, reasons and implications of the war useful for putting the strategies in perspective, for setting up and also understanding some of the rules. I don't know if there was an assumption on the rule writer's part that the players would know the historical details, but I would suggest the Angola war is not the most accessible subject, and background guidance would have been appreciated.

VICTORY

The above point is also relevant to the victory conditions, which are buried deep in the rules. As a result it is difficult to know what deployment to make on set-up and thus what strategy to employ in the game. It turns out that the important targets are the towns and cities, especially the capital, Luanda, and the vital northern stronghold of Cabinda. When you work them out, the victory conditions are cleverly handled and can result in the game being over quickly after a sequence of successful attacks by one side. The basis of the system is the earning of victory point credits each turn, which allow for the quick win, or contribute to the overall

game position, making victory easier. The credits also determine how much foreign aid and reinforcements are sent from abroad which can result in 'crisis' rolls where aid is needed but none is available. If the sudden victory doesn't happen, be prepared for a three to four hour game: by no means bad for this level of detail.

RULES

The rulebook is eighteen pages long and difficult to take in at one sitting. The style isn't too bad but I feel it would benefit from numbered sections and a clearer, more logically ordered approach. The rules, and the new concepts therein, have to be taken in as one large bite, but I can see that the game is 'all or nothing' in that it probably wouldn't accommodate short scenarios or programmed instruction. Overall, the rules are a good effort and need little more than some feedback from players on unclear points and a bit of tidying up and re-organising. There is a short errata sheet but most of the problems were fairly obvious anyway.

Where the rules do excel is in the ideas used to convey the nature of the conflict, and in the ample chrome included. At the basic level, the game is movement and combat, spiced with a command card system which allows limited activation and unpredictability. Actions are further limited by the fact that units must be combined into 'columns' which represent organisational entities and the rules covering these are, quite correctly, quite restrictive. Columns are the only units allowed to engage in combat though any unit may move if empowered by the command cards. The cards are initially limited and then grow in numbers as the war, and presumably efficiency, progresses. The additional rules are what make the game a feast of detail and they build the atmosphere very well. Units covered in the early game are infantry, armoured cars, tanks and artillery. Later on, engineers and air

groups appear to add to the interest. The units supplied by the overseas aid are very strong and add flavour as well as high strength points. It is here we get the Cuban tanks, mercenaries, rocket launchers and other esoterica that give the game its flavour. The units are brought into play with some clever reinforcement rules that constitute in effect a small bidding sub-game. Other rules covers cover anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, minefields and various smaller ideas that are quite original.

GAME PLAY

The map consists of around eighty regions which are deemed either clear, savannah, hills or jungle. Each type may include towns or cities and relief is added through escarpments which affect combat. The area movement system works well and the units can move quickly as long as they stay on the roads. Game play is smooth, fluid and interesting, the combat system offering close but not unreasonable results. Cities change hands frequently and the command card system helps to keep things unpredictable. As a small tip, we found it useful to mark the cities with

coloured counters to show possession in the fast-changing early and middle game. Overall, there is no shortage of strategic options and the two games we played were very different in approach.

SUMMARY

There are two main reasons for my not totally enthusing about the game. The first is personal and is simply that I couldn't find much to interest me in the subject. It would be going too far to say I couldn't care about the outcome, but that is not far from the truth. I suppose unusual topics have the inherent problem that they aren't going to appeal to everyone, and this one didn't do much for me. The other angle is that because of the garish colours, rule presentation and graphic style, the overwhelming feeling that one experiences which playing *Angola* is that it is an *amateur* production and this makes one dubious of its qualities as a game. This is nothing more than a bias from years of playing professional games but it is there nevertheless. The good news is that the feeling is, in the main, unfounded. As long as you are prepared to play a longish game, agree on some of the more ambiguous rules

and have some interest in the topic then the game plays as well as or better than many recent games. Given an *S&T* or *Counterattack* level of graphics presentation and some rules polishing, I think it would be quite at home in either of those magazines. Given the overall 'Balkoski approach' like Victory's *Lee vs Grant* (see the review last issue), it could well be very good indeed.

While *Angola*, as it stands, isn't going to put Huddersfield or the Ragnars on the boardgaming map, it is nevertheless a brave and competent first effort and good value at the price. The subject matter is unusual – surely a good thing – and the publishers have had the determination and know-how to get the game onto the market, even in big retail outlets. I hope that there will be more games forthcoming from the Brothers Ragnar, with equally unusual topics, and I for one will look forward to them.

Mike Siggins

Since this review was written Angola has been repackaged and now comes in a box, albeit at the cost of a few pounds more.

THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

DESIGNED BY
FRANK CHADWICK &
BRAD HAY

PUBLISHED BY
GAMES DESIGNERS
WORKSHOP

PRICE £14.95

The Great Patriotic War depicts the war years on the Russian front in World War Two. This titanic struggle is presented for play as either a campaign game which follows the war from June 1941 through to its conclusion in 1945, or by

individual scenarios that simulate five major operations spanning the war years.

COMPONENTS

The game is packaged in the standard 'bookcase' style box, and one might be forgiven for not looking past the box cover as it is uninteresting and dull. This is a shame as the good quality and visually appealing components deserve better fanfare.

Representing most of the Russian front, with the exception of the Balkans and the Finnish frontier, is a playing area that is both attractive and functional. Large hexes and a glossy surface facilitate easy movement of the standard half-inch counters over the map, which measures a total 22" x 33".

The twenty-four page rulebook is divided into basic, advanced and optional rules. Only the basic rules are required to play the opening scenario, 'Barbarossa'. The advanced rules

introduce aircraft, leaders, partisans and shock attacks and are required to play the other scenarios or campaign game. Although termed 'advanced' the section's clear and concise text makes this a very comfortable rule book for those new to the hobby. It is concluded by five pages of interesting design notes and game charts.

Each player is provided with a 16-page scenario booklet. This gives all the necessary information for each of the five scenarios and describes the organisation and general abilities and deficiencies of the participating armies. The turn track is used to display the order of battle and highlights the months in which mud and snow will make an appearance.

As a bonus, GDW have included a free copy of their *Battle for Moscow* game. This uses a similar system to *Great Patriotic War* and is designed to introduce the complete novice to wargaming; as such it is excellent.

GETTING STARTED

Setting up the game can be quite lengthy, but presorting units by their turn of entry numbers helps speed things up. Once grouped according to scenario instructions, the counters are transferred to the map and are set up within their historical army groups or military districts.

Once set up, the view is impressive. The colourful counters of either side clearly define the front line and make instantly apparent units that are out of supply or at risk of becoming out of supply. Most units are not stacked and thus both combat and movement values can be determined with ease. Although only a small point, this does contribute to the game's smooth play.

The scenarios themselves are well balanced and replayable, each setting demanding objectives that so often elude the player.

UNDER WAY

The heart of the game is the turn sequence, which beautifully models warfare at the Corps and Army level of this period. In each turn the players, German first, follow this sequence of play: reinforcements/replacements, rail movement, mechanised movement, combat, general movement.

The order of battle chart indicates which reinforcements arrive and how many replacement points are received. As might be expected, the Soviet situation for reinforcements and replacements is healthier than that of the German army. However, the designer does stress that even the Soviet resources were finite. The Russians also benefit from rail movement as they can move up to six units by rail each rail phase: a real life-saver in the early turns of the game.

Prior to combat, only mechanised units may move and thus can manoeuvre to concentrate at specific points for attack in the following combat phase. The attacker will hope to create sufficient gaps for friendly units to advance through in the general movement phase. In short: manoeuvre, attack and exploit.

Combat is resolved by using the standard odds ratio system; odds of 4-1 and greater will secure success of

varying degrees. Odds of 3-1 and less run the chance of an exchange result which causes the defender to reduce and then retreat but also requires the attacker to reduce by at least the same value as the defender. This is a sure way to see your armour units chewed up and it is often prudent to combine attacks with poorer units so that any losses can be taken by them. In general most combat results will require the defending unit to retreat.

When a retreat is called for, the attacking player moves the retreating unit two hexes away from the target hex. To retreat into an enemy zone of control causes the retreating unit to reduce in strength which may in turn eliminate it. Although the rules do not state so, it seems unfair for the attacker to retreat a defending unit into such a hostile zone of control if an alternative route offering safe movement exists. I have adopted this as a house rule.

SNOW & SUSTENANCE

The supply and weather rules are very easy to use, but have a considerable effect upon the game. Units that cannot trace lines of hexes free of enemy influence to their side of the map are considered to be out of supply. Supply is determined at the start of each combat and movement phase and being out of supply halves movement and attack factors although units defend normally.

Defenders are equally fortunate on the snow and mud turns: again they defend normally. Mud halves both movement and attack values and snow increases the cost of entry per hex by one point and shifts combat odds one column to the left. Most units in the middle of offensive actions in bad weather will find their activities curtailed, to say the least.

ICING ON THE CAKE

Leaders and air units create favourable column shifts in combat, and their flexibility enables them to be placed in the areas where they will be most useful: at the point of attack. Air units can be committed to different missions – attack, support and interception – again realism has been achieved by simple game mechanics. Both forces have an airborne landing capacity. Used at the

right time and place, the results such attacks achieve can be out of all proportion to their small combat strengths. These units are wasted if they are used as ordinary line units.

Victory is always measured in terms of territory: in other words cities captured. Forward movement is generally maintained by concentrating one's more powerful units at specific points and then taking advantage of breakthroughs in the movement phase. The need to preserve the stronger formations and the requirement to capture cities forces the player to compromise between taking casualties and the loss or gain of ground.

Questions will crop up during play, and some can be answered by logical thought. The majority, however, are answered in the rule book and can in the main be avoided by a thorough reading of the rules. Simply to glance through the rules is not sufficient – pertinent rules are tucked away in obscure places which makes quick reference difficult in some cases. For example, the stacking rule occupies but a single sentence within the section on movement – the last place one would look if the rules had not been read.

Overall, the game is good value for money, an excellent choice for beginners and a solid game for the collections of regular gamers. For those who have difficulty in finding an opponent, this game plays well solitaire. Congratulations to Frank Chadwick and Brad Hay who have managed to portray this scale and period of warfare accurately without resorting to complex rules, and for their efforts in trying to take this hobby to a wider audience.

For those who wish to study the period further, I would recommend *Barbarossa* by Alan Clarke as a general reference, and for a closer examination of the various campaigns I would suggest the works of John Erickson (*The Road to Stalingrad* and *The Road to Berlin*) together with *Operation Citadel* and *Moscow 1941* written by Janusz Piekalkiewicz.

Norman Smith

In our Origins report in the last issue we inadvertently referred to this game as 'The Great Colonial War'. This was due to a nervous breakdown on the part of the author. Our apologies to all concerned.

role-playing games

GURPS SPACE

DESIGNED BY
STEVE JACKSON &
WILLIAM A BARTON

PUBLISHED BY
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

PRICE £8.95

For those who don't know, GURPS is a generic, background-less system, for which Steve Jackson Games are releasing a steady stream of sourcebooks, all very detailed but most of them tied a little too closely to one setting. **GURPS Space**, one of the earliest promised and most eagerly awaited sourcebooks, attains almost total completeness but avoids being too specific to one style of SF gaming. It is a sourcebook which allows the referee to define and design their own SF background to a campaign. It covers everything from planetary system design (complete with rules for working out accurate orbit distances and

gravities) to lists of equipment for Tech Levels up to 16, which is 'science-fantasy' level, all spiced with a sly humour. It describes the different structures of planetary and interstellar government, starship design, character professions – and says 'take your pick'.

It's almost totally complete: the only omission I could find was no mention of robots. The mechanics, where given, are tied a little too closely to the GURPS system, but there are only 15–20 pages, which can easily be converted or scrapped. The book only covers four alien races, but apparently GURPS Aliens is in the works to correct this.

GURPS Space is ideal for any referee who isn't satisfied with existing SF systems and wants to design their own or to convert a favourite book into a rolegaming environment. It tends to dwell on the hard-SF aspects: planetary atmosphere rather than game atmosphere; and while you could easily create your own *Star Wars*, *Dune* or *Retief Of The CDT* with this sourcebook, something like *Windhaven* or *BladeRunner* would pose problems. The lack of system-specific rules make this ideal for merging with a system with mechanics simpler than GURPS' own and without an intrusive background: **Traveller** would be a good choice.

£8.95 may seem a great deal to pay for a sourcebook with no system, but **GURPS Space** is worth it for its attention to scientific accuracy and detail. Every SF referee should have one.

James Wallis

GURPS SPACE ATLAS

DESIGNED BY
STEVE JACKSON &
WILLIAM A BARTON

PUBLISHED BY
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

PRICE £4.95

Behind a lovely Foss-esque cover lurk the maps, stats and descriptions of 28 star systems in the Old Frontiers sector of space, with 2–3 adventure ideas for each system. They are designed in the format used by **GURPS Space**, but can be used with any SF system.

Most descriptions are complete enough without intruding on anything a referee might want to add or alter. The diversity of planets is wide, although only two contain their own sentient life-forms. One or two adventure ideas link different planetary systems.

This is a useful addition for the referee who likes to base adventures on other people's groundwork, or lacks the imagination to create their own systems. Generally good, but of limited usefulness.

James Wallis

VIRGIN GAMES TOP 10 ROLEGAMES

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Strike Force Shantipole
(Star Wars, West End) | 6) Far Harad (MERP, ICE) |
| 2) Forgotten Realms City System
(AD&D, TSR) | 7) Officer's Manual Next Generation
(Star Trek, FASA) |
| 3) MegaTraveller Refs Companion
(GDW) | 8) Player's Handbook (AD&D, TSR) |
| 4) Shadow on the South
(MERP/RM, ICE) | 9) Greyhawk Adventures
(AD&D, TSR) |
| 5) Basic D&D (TSR) | 10) Ground Vehicle Guide
(2300, GDW) |

UNNIGHT

DESIGNED BY
STEFAN JONES

PUBLISHED BY
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

(GURPS SPACE
SUPPLEMENT)

PRICE £4.95

**

Unnight is an attempt to follow in the footsteps of *Empire of the Petal Throne* and *SkyRealms of Jorune*. The background is roughly this: Earth decided to put third-worlders from a multiplicity of cultures onto three FTL

vessels. They missed the star they were aimed at, ending up instead in a system in the middle of a nebula. After the inevitable loss/breakdown of their technology, their society reverted to various feudal states in a fantasy-esque mould, with a few odd extras thrown in to spice it all up.

The planetary system of **Unnight** is fascinating, with a hollow moon larger than the planet it orbits, all constructed by an Ancient Race. Orbits, gravities and densities are lovingly described. Unfortunately, once we get onto the planet surface, we might as well be in **GURPS Fantasy**. There are wizards (disguised technologists), dwarfs (pygmies) and a group of aristocratic hang-glider pilots called the 'Hawk Lords'. This is not a lovingly-constructed fantasy culture: it is a project cobbled together by a writer faced by deadline doom. The standard of editing and layout reflects this: most page references are incorrect and the

sidebars suddenly start appearing in the centre instead of the outside edge halfway through the book. Obvious ideas are not taken up – the only residue of the Ancient Race who built the system, for example, are some pointless induced hallucinations; and the one group of non-player characters of any interest turn out to be just another band of fanatical assassins.

As a place for characters from the **GURPS Space** background to visit, **Unnight** just about stands up, although it is too gimmicky for my tastes and the adventure that comes with it is uninspired. As a background for native adventures, it is unimaginative and lacking in potential. As a project, it could have done with an extra 36 pages, a thorough reworking and another six months' work. **Unnight** is not a rival to *Empire of the Petal Throne* or *Jorune*, it is a very pale imitation.

James Wallis

STRIKE FORCE: SHANTIPOLE

DESIGNED BY
KEN ROLSTON & STEVE
GILBERT

PUBLISHED BY
WEST END GAMES

(STAR WARS SCENARIO)

PRICE £5.95

*** 1/2

Unless you're going to treat it as just another SF rolegame, satisfactory **Star Wars** scenarios are hard to create. Blending the familiar hardware, exotic aliens, recognisable NPCs, the villainous Empire and above all the 'feel' of the films with a fast-moving, playable and exciting plot can be difficult, especially if your players (like mine) are constantly trying to alter events so that 'Return of the Jedi' can't happen in your **Star Wars** universe! West End, therefore, are to be

congratulated for coming up with another adventure which captures the spirit of the films almost perfectly, but without dictating the characters' actions to them.

LONG AGO . . .

The central plot of **Strike Force: Shantipole** is straightforward. A group of rebels led by Commander Ackbar are developing a new B-Wing fighter with the assistance of a new alien race, the insectoid Verpine, who inhabit a massive asteroid field. The characters have to escort the prototype ships to Alliance High Command and this is where the problems start, because the Empire have discovered the project's location and are determined to capture or destroy everything that looks as though it might be rebel within this star system. The central plot thread is fairly simple, and as usual the referee is given more background information than the players should ever know, but this helps to create the right atmosphere for the adventure.

If the plot is simple, it's certainly not linear: there are plenty of opportunities for the characters to change the course of the adventure, some of which may be disastrous for them and the rebellion! Everything happens at a cracking pace, each stage starting almost before the

previous one has finished, and the players are given a continual sense of the urgency of their mission, and of the lack of time left. The action features Imperial probots, a rebel traitor, a great deal of running through tunnels inside asteroids and two space combats, for which West End have thoughtfully provided new counters for the **Star Warriors** game. This rankles slightly; the climactic battle almost requires the boxed combat set if it is to be played out properly.

Physically the package is very good. In addition to the 32 pages of text and the counters mentioned above, the package contains the rules upgrade and a large (and slightly unnecessary) map of the main asteroid from the scenario. The booklet is well laid out, with clear sections and plenty of illustrations. There is also a pull-out section with maps and NPC information on it.

Strike Force: Shantipole runs well as a **Star Wars** adventure, but it lacks depth and, apart from the new alien race and the upgraded B-Wings it contains little of any great consequence, not even an interesting NPC. All in all, it is a useful package for those who don't want to write their own material for **Star Wars** but by no means an essential buy.

James Wallis

GLORANTHA: GENERTELA, CRUCIBLE OF THE HERO WARS

**DESIGNED BY
GREG STAFFORD**

**PUBLISHED BY
AVALON HILL**

(RUNEQUEST SUPPLEMENT)

PRICE £16.50

Yes, veteran RuneQuesters, this is where it all began – remember the famous rumble at Gimpy's Tavern, happy hours in Apple Lane? The good old days...

Now at last comes the chance to get back to Glorantha (or for those of us who never left it, the chance to find out more about this wonderful world).

For the uninitiated, Glorantha was the magical world in which the first incarnation of the **RuneQuest** game was set. Later versions of the game abruptly severed **RuneQuest** from these mythical roots, much to its impoverishment. After all, the best rolegames are those which come with a complete, detailed setting. If you haven't played in a Gloranthan campaign, you haven't really played **RuneQuest**!

So, what do you get for your hard-earned money? The box contains three books and a large, three-colour map of the continent of Genertela.

Book one (38 pages) provides a broad overview of the world of Glorantha. If you are a newcomer to this world, this book will provide a course of basic orientation. Seasoned Gloranthan RuneQuesters will find little new material here, but there are occasional gems sparkling beside the well-worn pathways.

First comes a basic introductory essay which covers the physical nature of

Glorantha, human racial types, economics, magic and religion, demographics and population growth, social organisation and politics, and basic hints on Gloranthan adventuring. This is followed by a description of the six worlds (or planes) of Glorantha, with some interesting new material on the God Plane, the Spirit Plane, the three levels of the Hero Plane (with a few ways to get there!), and the Inner Plane, world of mortals. Again, the detail is rather sketchy; you certainly couldn't organise a campaign around this section, but it might be a fruitful source of lore and rumour.

Then comes a world history of Glorantha (13 pages of text) which is surely the most detailed exposition of the subject ever presented in one article. Beginning with some notes on prehistory and mythic origins, it goes on to detail each of the Three Ages (Dawn Age, Imperial Age and the present Third Age), together with an easy reference time chart for each. This section is the backbone of the book.

The booklet concludes with a page labelled 'Designer's Notes'. It is actually an account by Greg Stafford of his years of involvement with Glorantha, which I found strangely moving.

So much for the broad overview. Book two (98 pages) concentrates on the continent of Genertela, giving details on its areas, occupants, geography and politics. This material is set in the year 1621 ST – so the dire events of the Hero Wars are still in the future, and one of the expressed purposes of this pack is 'to encourage campaigns in which powerful characters are prepared for eventual participation in the Hero Wars.'

Each of the ten chapters of this book has a standard format (shades of 'Cults of Prax', 'Cults of Terror', et al) and each deals with a specific area of Genertela. This set format includes: a greeting common in that area ('I am one of the people of (X), brothers to the men of the Great Empire. May the Red Moon watch over us all!'), population breakdown tables, lists of common, uncommon and rare events in that area (for example, in the Lunar Provinces, the public execution of captured rebels is common, a visit by the Crimson Bat is uncommon, and the dreaded Rabbit Curse – which I won't even describe – is decidedly rare!); almost anything you

want to know about any of the regions or their many sub-regions will be found here somewhere. The attention to detail is quite staggering. Each of the numerous maps contains enough topographical and political detail to get a campaign off the ground. And joy of joys! There are still one or two blank lands! A blank land is an area which the game designers originally stated that they would *not* be covering in any forthcoming supplements, so that referees would be free to create their own private little section of Glorantha without fear of later 'official' contradiction.

Returning to the Hero Wars, each of the many peoples of Genertela have their own prophecies about these cataclysmic times, and you can read them here, together with a commentary on each. It's all good stuff and, quite frankly, Glorantha referees ought to buy this pack even if this book was all it contained!

In the third book (34 pages) you will look in vain for the hard facts and figures of book two, but this is a wonderful book all the same. Described as a players' book, its aim is to give players a crash course in what their character will know about his area and world. It suggests that new players take one of four distinct character types. These are the Hsunchen primitive hunters, the Praxian nomads, the Orlanthi barbarian warrior, or the Western civilised soldier. A wealth of essential detail is given for each of these classes, but the beautiful feature of this book is that for each type an imaginary conversation with one's father or uncle is given. These questions and answers are informative and amusing, and not always true (since they represent the culture's view of itself, not the attitude of an impartial observer). Typical questions are: are we a great people? Who are our gods? What is my lot in life?

The remainder of the book deals with character generation tables to determine (for each region) race, occupation, magic, weapons, cults etc.

I didn't expect much from this pack when I opened it, but I am a convert now. This is **RuneQuest** as it was meant to be. Start saving now – you gotta get this pack!

John Scott

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P.B.M.

PLAY BY MAIL GAMES

After the brief introduction to PBM last issue, we will be using what will be our standard layout for this section of the magazine: news and mention of new products followed by a review. PBM games differ from the other products covered in this magazine in that they can't be properly reviewed when they are released (not if you have a commitment to giving fair and accurate reviews). We will try to give a mention to new products as and when they are released, and follow it up with a proper review once we have had a chance to play the game.

PBM players who have been in the hobby for a while will be wondering what is happening to the London PBM convention. This event, which is possibly the main one in the British PBMer's calendar, usually takes place in February. Publicity for it is normally well advanced by now, yet there has been no mention of it anywhere yet. As we go to press, the situation is that the organisers have had problems obtaining a hall (the one they used last year having been sold to private hands and subsequently become much more expensive to hire). The convention has been postponed until April to give

sufficient time to organise it; a site is still being looked for. It looks quite likely that a London University or Poly will end up the final choice.

One new game which I have received details of recently is *Calvana*, the first offering from Tertium Games. *Calvana* is a single-character role-playing PBM, and gives the players lots of source information from the word go. The sourcebook is fairly well presented with lots of good artwork (and a few less satisfactory pieces) making it a fairly easy read. It is let down a bit by a very poorly designed cover but otherwise looks better than average.

The game itself is obviously intended to encourage role-playing rather than number-crunching and it is apparent that considerable effort has gone into achieving this aim. One novel idea is that you have the opportunity to indicate to the referee what manner of round you want, by telling him whether you are more interested in the small details of everyday life, or in large-scale intrigue and power-play.

As well as the sourcebook, I have seen other game material including maps of

varying kinds and some sample rounds. Based upon first impressions I would say that this looks a good product. What remains to be seen is how good the refereeing is, and how reliable their service is. The startup fee of £7.50 covers the sourcebook, lots of other information sheets and maps and your first two rounds. Additional rounds are priced at £2. The startup fee seems a bit steep, but the round fee is about average for a commercial rolegame PBM.

If you are new to PBM and would like more information on the hobby, then I would suggest joining the Postal Gamers' Association. This Association produces a regular newsletter for PBMs and is also starting a range of services from the New Year, including a contact service and an Ombudsman – to chase up companies who provide a bad service. Membership for a year (including 4 issues) costs £4, a sample issue is £1.25. Although fairly new, the association already has the backing of a large number of PBM companies and has a large subscriber base.

Jon Woodall

THE ENCHIRIDION

Sloth Enterprises Turn Fee £2

The first thing you notice upon reading the rulebook for this offering is the lack of many strict rules. The game seems to have been designed for the role-players amongst us, rather than the rule-players, and anything you want to try will be considered by the referee.

The game is basically a treasure hunt, the object being the recovery of the Enchiridion, a grimoire of Menkar the

Firelord which contains the sum of this powerful Mage's knowledge.

You start the game at one of ten cities, each of which has learnt of the Enchiridion's existence. Just as you were dreaming of retirement and a peaceful life, you are summoned and told that you have been selected to represent your city in the quest for the book of Menkar.

This is a team game with five players representing each city. As a

consequence, player interaction in high and co-operation essential if your city is to claim victory. The cities you can choose from are varied, ranging from Riggles Fast, city of assassins, to Darlay, home of goodly knights. My own party hails from Simoth which is under the sway of a huge demon who has threatened me with all sorts of unpleasantness if I fail in my task.

When starting you must choose, name and equip your party of intrepid adventurers. The only stipulations

about a party's composition are that it must consist of three to seven characters, drawn from the human, elven, goblin and minotaur races. You are then given skill points to divide among them: the leader getting 250 points and there being 500 to split between the rest. These are allocated to fighting skill, magical skill and stealth skill, and also for 'purchasing' secondary skills (musician, marksman, swimming etc). Hence, I ended up with a goblin called Muffin who has the ability to repair stonework and craft stone, along with a human who can drink anyone under the table. Fortitude points are then allocated to your party on a similar basis to skill points.

The next stage is to choose five spells from a wide and varied list. The magic system is simple: I found the hardest part was deciding which five to have as nearly all seem indispensable. Your final task before dashing off to parts unknown is to equip your band using the 150 *strin* you are given by your city leaders. You can buy anything from a two-handed sword to a pair of crutches(?), prices for each being printed in the rulebook. This done you

are ready to embark on the long journey to the Firelord's Underground Realm.

I found the rounds I have received to be well written and thought out, with a high standard of refereeing. The unique thing about the game is the quantity of puzzles and riddles that are placed before you. I have found myself racking my brains for hours over a riddle written on a wall. It's also the first role-playing PBM I've encountered with a definite conclusion. Combat is fast and furious for the hack and slay fans, though it's usually avoidable.

Each turn the referee awards each of your characters bonus points, depending upon what actions they have performed. These are accumulated to increase their levels and boost their fortitude.

Turns cost £2 and in my view represent good value for money. Turnaround has been slow lately owing to staff changes at Sloth, but has picked up over the last few weeks. The rulebook is clear and concise and the referee is always prepared to answer any questions or problems put to him. A newsletter is

sent to show players' progress in the game but this is brief to say the least and could, I think, be improved.

Another unique feature of the game is the prize fund. 10% of all turn fees go into this and the player of the winning group will receive 60% of this – the other 40% going to his team-mates. This certainly puts a new angle on the PBM game. Could other companies follow this example (*In fact a few others already have – Ed*).

All in all a good game which should appeal to both new and experienced PBMs.

Paul Mallinder

Addresses of companies mentioned this issue:

PGA, Basement Flat, 5 St Annes Crescent, Lewes, E Sussex BN7 1SB

Sloth Enterprises, FREEPOST, Southampton SO9 1BH

Tertium Games, 81 Coldyhill Lane, Scarborough, North Yorks YO12 6SE

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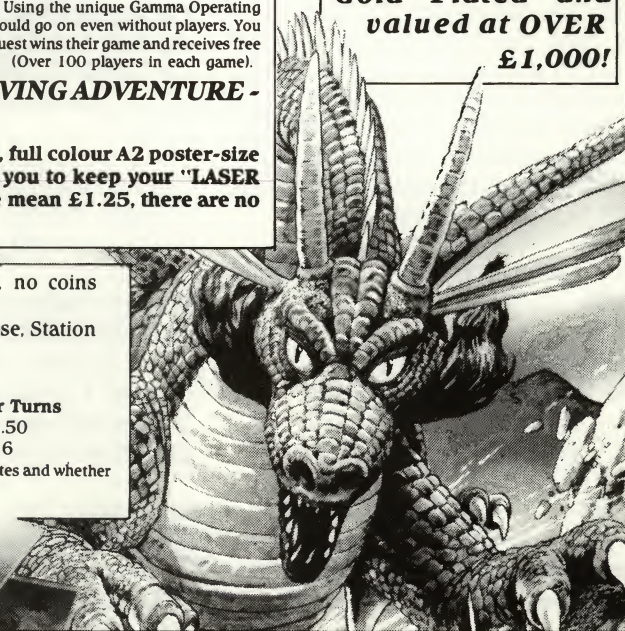
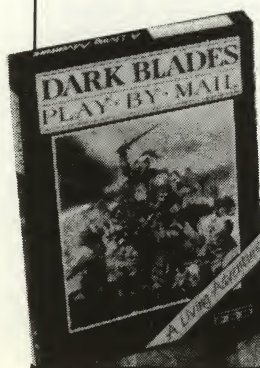
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REBOUND



Write to: *Games International*, Lamerton House, 23a High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DF

McFaulty

Congratulations on your new magazine: clear sections, relaxed style, a staff of which one can expect a lot (though, do you think the American desk is well suited to a tin can?) and fine reviews. Amazingly it needed an English journal to show me that I played **McMulti** wrong for months: I misunderstood that 'trend arrow' on the economic cards just the way you pointed out.

Good luck to the journal of fun and games,

Hans Reinhold
3045 Bispingen, West Germany

Binding

I have just read a copy of GI which in my opinion is by far the best games magazine I have read since the demise

of *The Gamer*, including the present bunch.

As a collector of boardgames (now running at about 700!) I am extremely interested in future issues of GI. Will you include a collectors' page? Do you plan to produce binders to hold copies of GI?

I find it amazing that issue one runs to 52 pages, will this be the normal size in the future or will you increase this?

Whatever happens I would like to wish all those involved in the production of GI all the very best of luck with the venture. I for one will give it all my support and spread the word wherever and whenever possible.

Bill Dove
Hampshire GU30 7DD

To deal with your points in order: the 'Gone But Not Forgotten' series should

be of interest to collectors. We plan to introduce binders for the magazine in the near future, probably after 6 months.

The page count will stay at a minimum of 52 pages for the time being, though for this issue we had enough material for nearly double that.

Harp On

Congratulations on your new magazine. Layout – pleasing. Content – interesting, but I would like to see more coverage of simple family games (like mine!) – well, I would, wouldn't I. Front cover graphics – superb. Front cover colour – why, oh why did you choose the colour of stale puke?

Maureen Hiron
Hiron Games
London W14

We tried to colour match it to some of your cards. As for reviewing simpler games like your own Gin Rummy, whoop's, I mean Croque, we intend to review all kinds of games though not necessarily in the same issue.

Counterattack

May I compliment you on the high standard of the first issue of your new magazine, *Games International*.

In passing I would mention that TM Games are the United Kingdom distributors for Jeffery Tibbetts's new magazine and game, *Counterattack*. We are also the distributors for his two bi-monthly publications *Battle-Technology* and *The Grenadier*.

I think it would be useful if, when you review magazine games, particularly if they are imported titles, you include the name of the UK distributor as well as the designer, publisher and price.

Once again my compliments on the high standard of your first issue and I look forward to the next issue.

Michael Hodge
TM Games
W Sussex BN16 3AG

The feature to which you refer was part of an occasional series, but yes, in future we will be happy to concur with your wishes.

Kuhhandel, Ausbrecher and Hols der Geier.

Mark R Green
Just Games
Brewer St, London W1R 3FB

Just In

Congratulations on an excellent first issue of *Games International*. However I am really writing to proffer my apologies to your readers who have tried to obtain some of the German games, reviewed in your magazine, from our store. The fact of the matter is that we have been badly let down by certain German companies who have been promising shipment for months but lamentably failing to deliver! However we have had shipments from Hexagames, Holtmann and Ravensburger, so we now have in stock **McMulti, Black Monday, Karriere Poker, Six Day Race, Borsenspiel, Gold, Greyhounds, Undercover,**

Tyrannosaurus Rex

Just a quick note to tell you how much I enjoyed the first issue of *Games International*. I can't remember when I read more of a gaming magazine. Usually the current crop of games mags don't offer more than a few pages of interest to me, but I read and enjoyed most of your first issue. The writing was excellent and true to the mark . . . especially the description of Rex Martin's Halloween costume. Carry on . . .

Donald J Greenwood
The Avalon Hill Game Company
Baltimore, USA

Fun and Games

Congratulations for the first issue of GI. It is fun to read and very interesting too. I hope you won't share the destiny of your forerunners. All in all it is good to know that all game enthusiasts now have another mag that deals with their favourite subject.

Manfred Gaus
3000 Hannover 1, West Germany

Mad Moon Rising

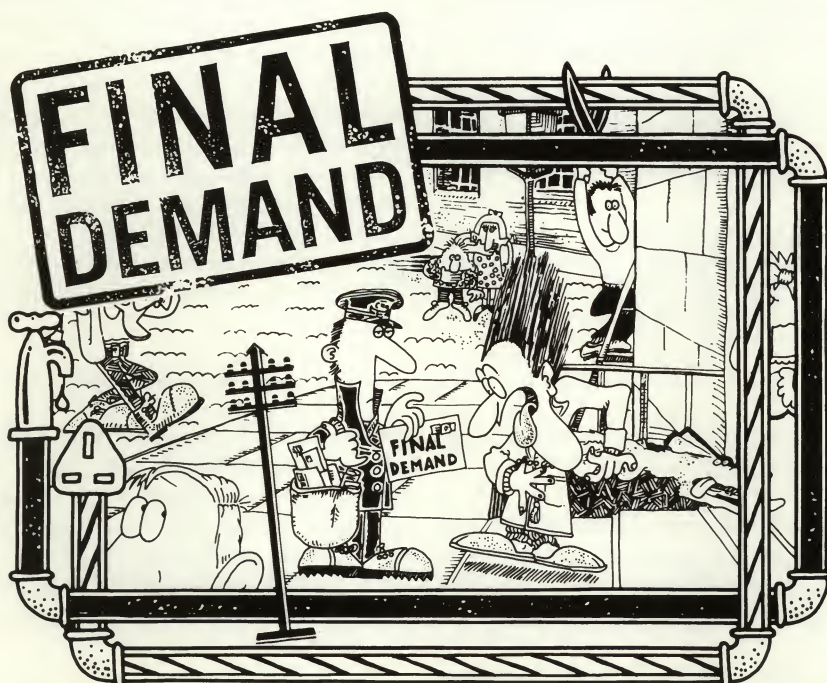
I have a suggestion: push Mr Moon into writing something similar to 'The Asylum'. His strange humour was always the highlight of every 'General'. Good luck and best wishes to your magazine.

George Buthe
Leverkusen, Germany

WANTED: WRITERS & DESIGNERS

Reckon you've got what it takes to write for GI? We're looking for general features for the magazine. We're particularly interested in variant on existing games. Send your finely crafted works of genius to: Games International Submissions, Lamerton House, 23a High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DF.

The moon has of course always been associated with madness. How appropriate, therefore, that Alan should write a column entitled The Asylum. We'll do what we can to try to revive Alan's career, but writing in a strait-jacket is tough.



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CONVENTION DIARY

GAMES CLUBS

SIGMA GAMES CLUB meets every 2nd, 4th, and 5th (if applicable) Sunday of the month at the Intervarsity Club, Bedford Chambers, King St. Covent Garden, London. 3-10.30pm. Games played include Empire Builder, Talisman, Titan, 1830, and many more.

GAMES MEETING every Tuesday at the Bun Shop Pub, Berrylands Rd. Surbiton. 7pm till closing time. Wide variety of board games and role-playing games.

GLC (R.I.P.) Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Minatures, two player board wargames, Warhammer 40k, Pax Britannica, 1830, etc.

NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7-10.30pm. Contact: Mick Haytack (0332) 511898.

NEW MALDEN & SURBITON games group meets every other Monday at the Railway Hotel Pub, Coombe Road, New Malden. 7pm till closing time. Miniature figure wargames include Vietnam, Warhammer 40K and others. Board gamers and role-players welcome. Contact: Peter (01) 942 5624.

GERMANY

SPIELRATZN at the Gross Wirt pub every other Friday. Winthstr. Munich 19, Germany. For further details contact: Bernd Brunnhofer (089) 264150.

FANTASY WORLD Role Playing Club in Munich. For more info contact: Detlov Motz, Vorholzerstr. 4, 8000 Munich 71. Tel. (089) 795244.

USA

NORTH SHORE GAMES CLUB meets approximately once a month somewhere in Massachusetts. Tournaments, food, and even a newsletter. For more details of this, and other East Coast games clubs, contact Alan Moon, 11

Broadway, Apt.1, Beverly, MA. 01918. Tel. (508) 922-7488.

EAST VALLEY Advanced Squad Leader Club. Contact: Pierce Ostrander, 5046 E. Decatur St. Mesa, AZ. 85205. Tel. (602) 985 4505.

WINDY CITY WARGAMERS meet twice a month. Minatures and board wargames, plus newsletter. Louie Tokarz, 5724 W. 106th St., Chicago Ridge, IL. 60415. Tel.(312) 857 7060.

NEW ORLEANS GAMES CLUB seeks players for all kinds of games. Contact: Greg Schloesser, 3800 Briant Drive, Marrero, LA 70072. Tel. (504) 347 7145.

HEXAGON SOCIETY meets every first and third Saturday From 10am to 6pm. Contact: James McCormack, 1450 Harmon Ave. 224c Las Vegas, NV 89119. Tel. (702) 794 3523 (evenings)

PENN-JERSEY GAMERS meet monthly and play most games, but no role playing. Newsletter, tournaments, raffles. Contact: Jim Vroom, 2290 Galloway Rd., A-23, Bensalem, PA 19020.

SCHENECTADY WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION have regular meetings and hold weekend conventions featuring tournaments based on Axis & Allies, Empire Builder, and Machiavelli. Role playing too. Contact: Eric Paperman, 418 Vliet Blvd. Cohoes, NY 12047. Tel. (581) 237 5874.

SANTA FE SPRINGS GAMERS ASSOC. looking for new members to play boardgames and Role-Playing games. Tues/Thurs 5-9pm. Saturdays 9am-5pm. at the Town Centre Hall, 11740 E.Telegraph Rd. Santa Fe Springs, CA. Tel. (213) 863 4896 (club hours only).

WASHINGTON GAMERS ASSOC. meets monthly, and publishes a bimonthly newsletter (\$5 for six issues). Contact: Dennis Wang, 2200 Huntington Ave. Alexandria, VA.22303. Tel. (703) 960 1259

MIAMI GAMING CLUB seeks new members. All types of games played. Meetings are once a week from 7pm to 11pm. Thurs. or Fri. at 7200 S.W. 7th St. Miami. Contact: Rex on 264 9752, or Steve on 271 5418.

UK

BABBACON, 14th-16th April 1989. General boardgames convention in a beautiful setting on the *riviera anglais*, including amongst other attractions a **Britannia** tournament. Contact Rob Chapman, 7 Baymount, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2LD.

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SPIEL '89, the Essen Games Fair with expanded InterTEAM tournament, at the Gruganhalle, Essen from the 17th-22nd October 1989.

NORTH AMERICA

ORCCON 12, the western regional game convention: February 10th-13th 1989 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Strategy, family and adventure: board, role-playing, miniature & computer games played. Call (213) 420 3675 for more information.

ORIGINS, the national strategy and adventure gaming convention and exposition: June 28th to July 2nd, 1989 at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton Hotel. Call (213) 420 3675 for more information or write to LA Origins '89, 5374 Village Road, Long Beach, CA 90808.

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PRIZE PROPERTY. Has anybody out there got the rules of this 1970s MB game? If so, I should be delighted to hear from you. Denis Arnold, 19 Sunray

Ave, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QG (0394 274145).

SEARCHING for Game of Ancient Kingdoms (Hartland). Contact Ernst Knauth, Nachsommerweg 35, 7000 Stuttgart 40, West Germany.

GERMAN COLLECTOR is looking for all kinds of boardgames, especially from 3M, Gamut of Games etc. Also interested in very old games. Manfred Gaus, Lavesstraße 19, 3000 Hannover 1, West Germany.

SKYREALMS OF JORUNE: Calling all you chatty Sholaris and players out there. Want to swap ideas, essays, scenarios, campaign write-ups etc? You do? Call me on Woking 26926 or write to David Castle, April Cottage, Prey Heath Close, Mayford, Woking, Surrey GU22 0SP.

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